Future

THE YARDBIRDS

HOW CLAPTON, PAGE & BECK CREATED THE BLUEPRINT FOR BRITISH ROCK

SAXON

BYFORD, OLIVER & DAWSON ON THE GLORY YEARS

★CLASSIC★ ROCK

HIGH VOLTAGE ROCK'N'ROLL

THE MAN WHO POWERED AC/DC

ALIENS! THE CARPENTERS! THE BEATLES! *The curious case of* Klaatu

ROCK'S FINAL SALUTE

MALCOLM YOUNG

Plus!

GERRY RAFFERTY

HIS RISE AND TRAGIC FALL

ELECTRIC WIZARD

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Also

ZAKK WYLDE

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TEN YEARS AFTER

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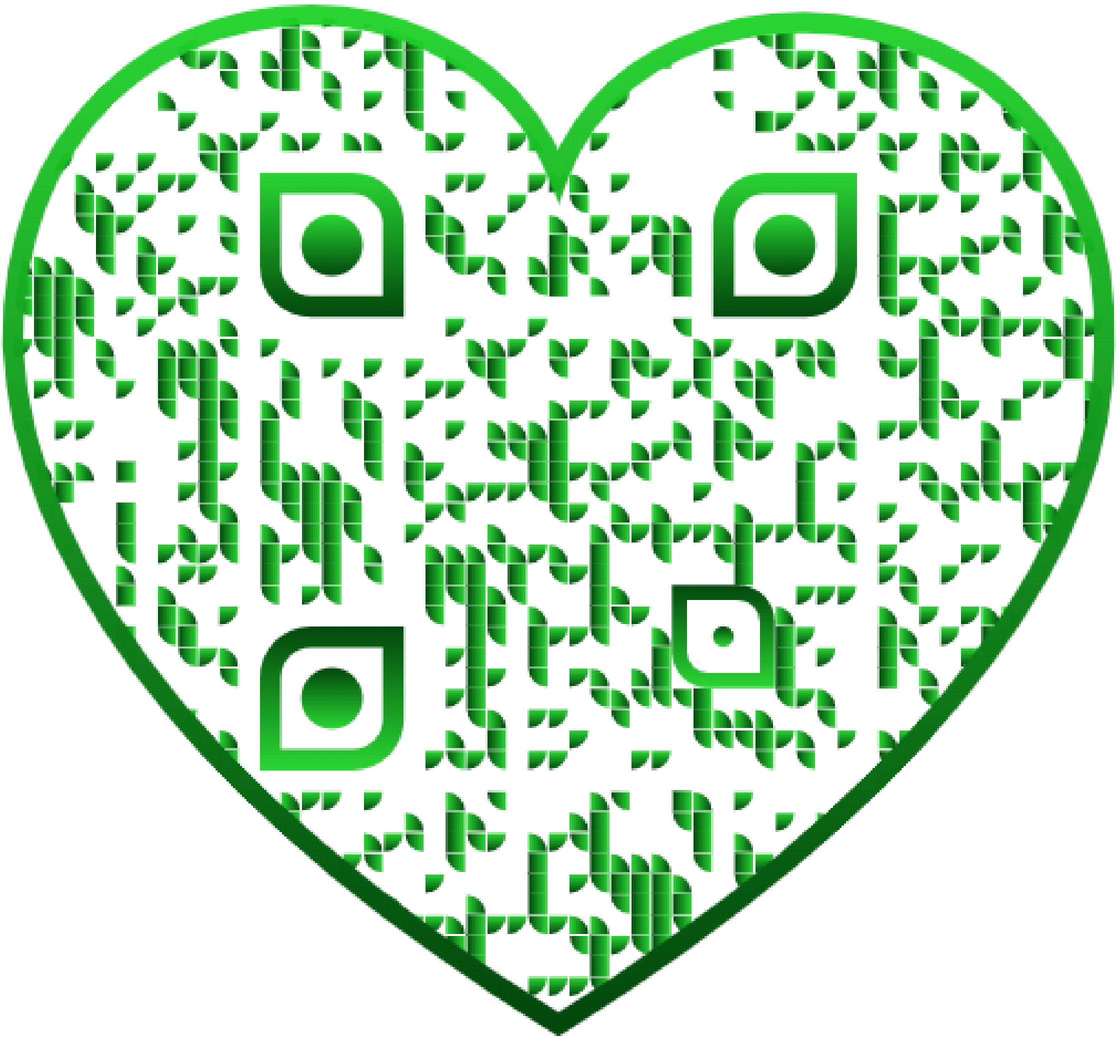
And more!



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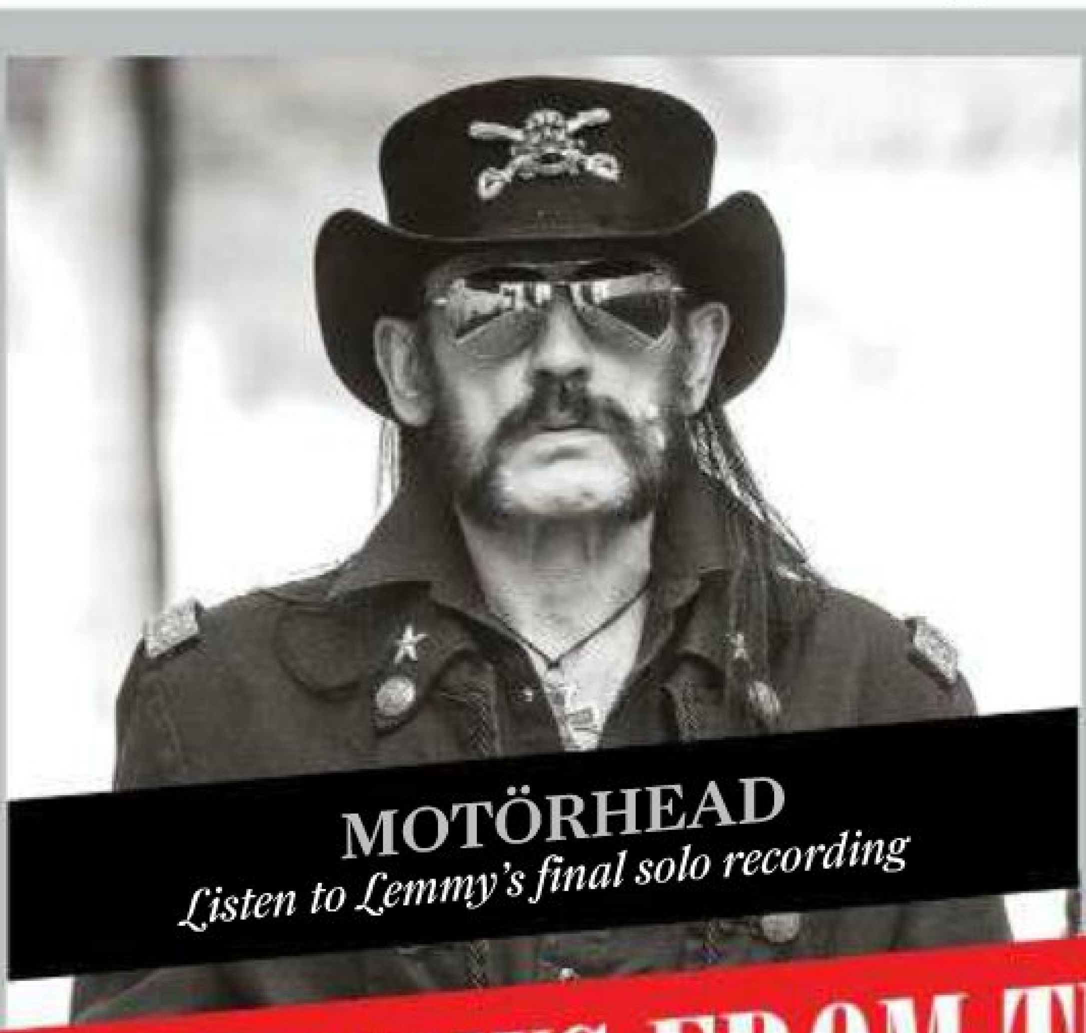

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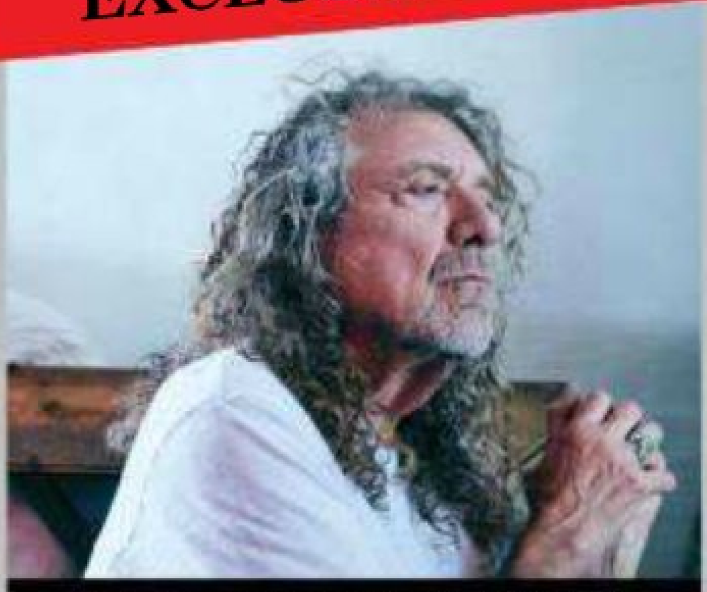

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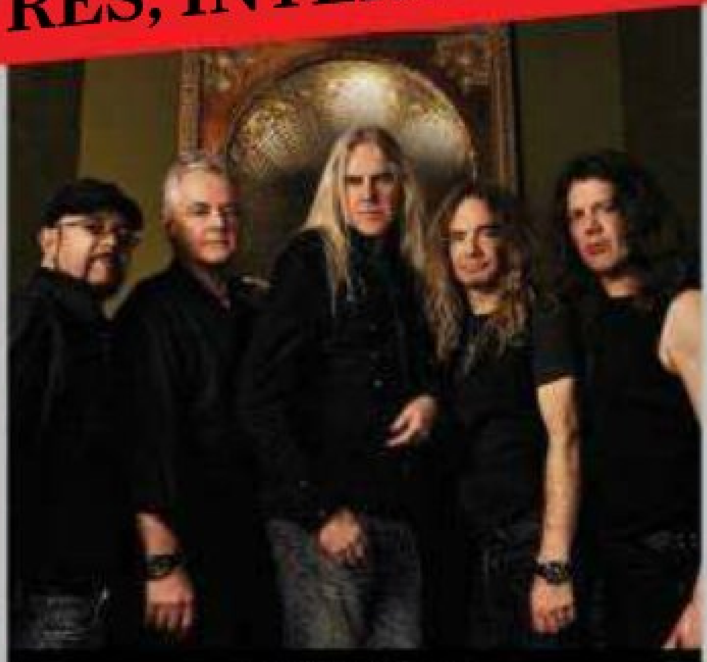

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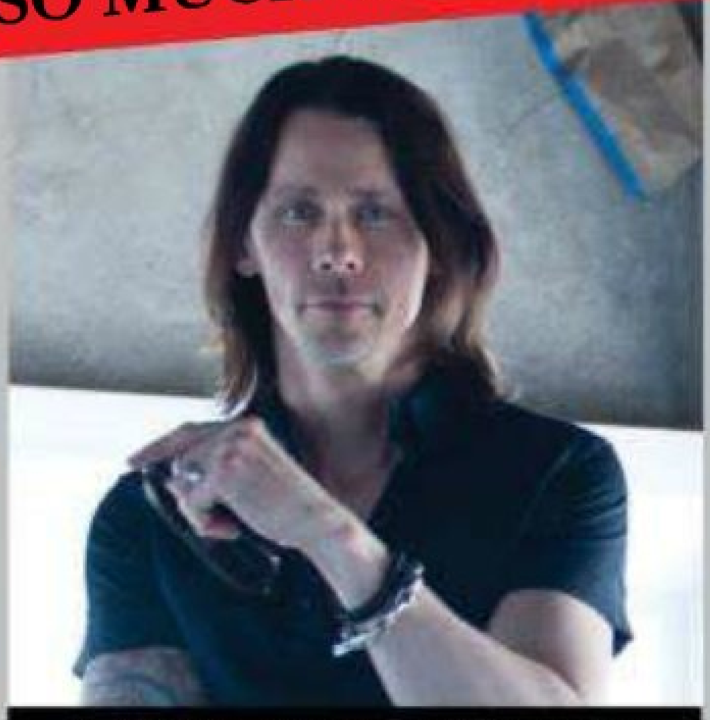

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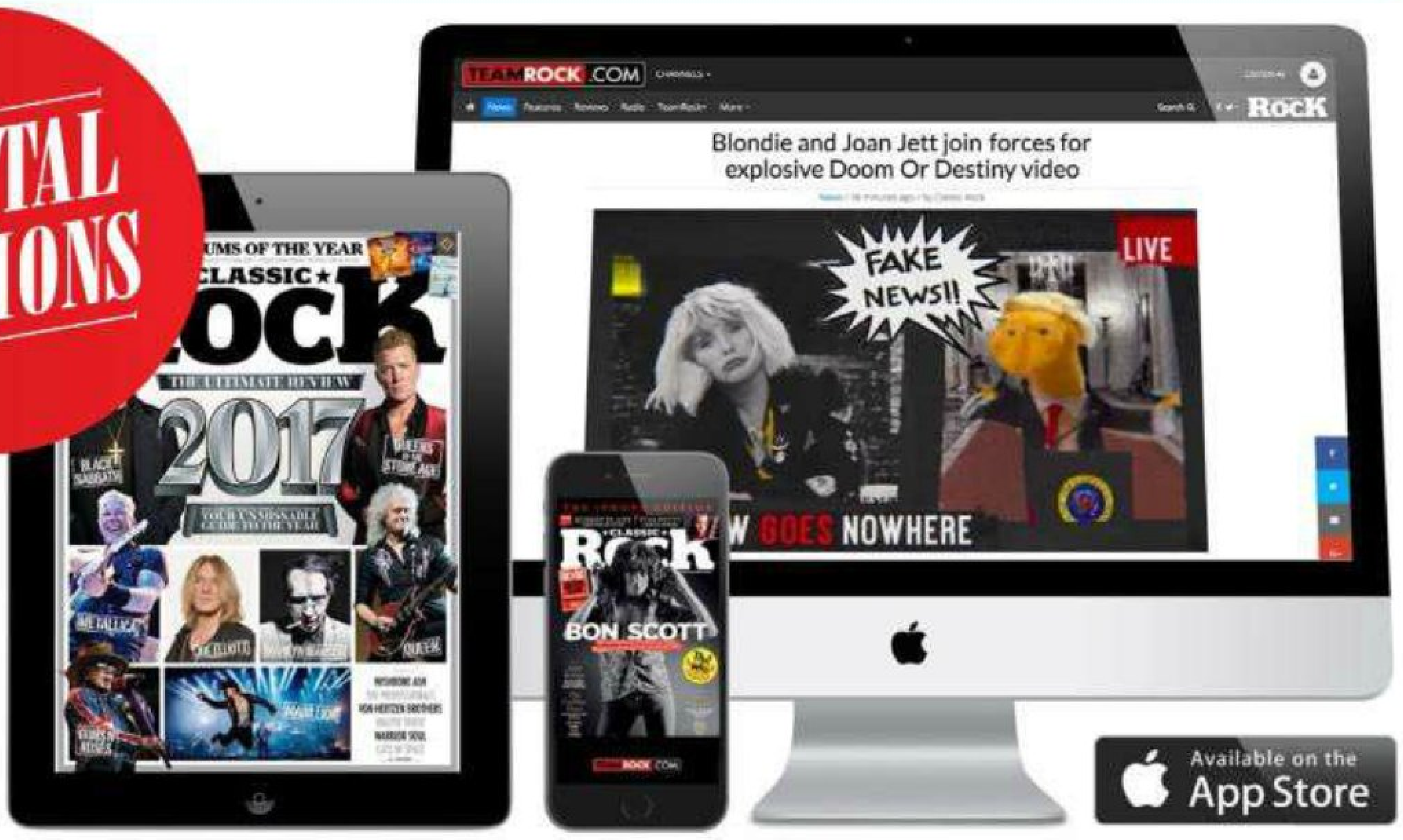

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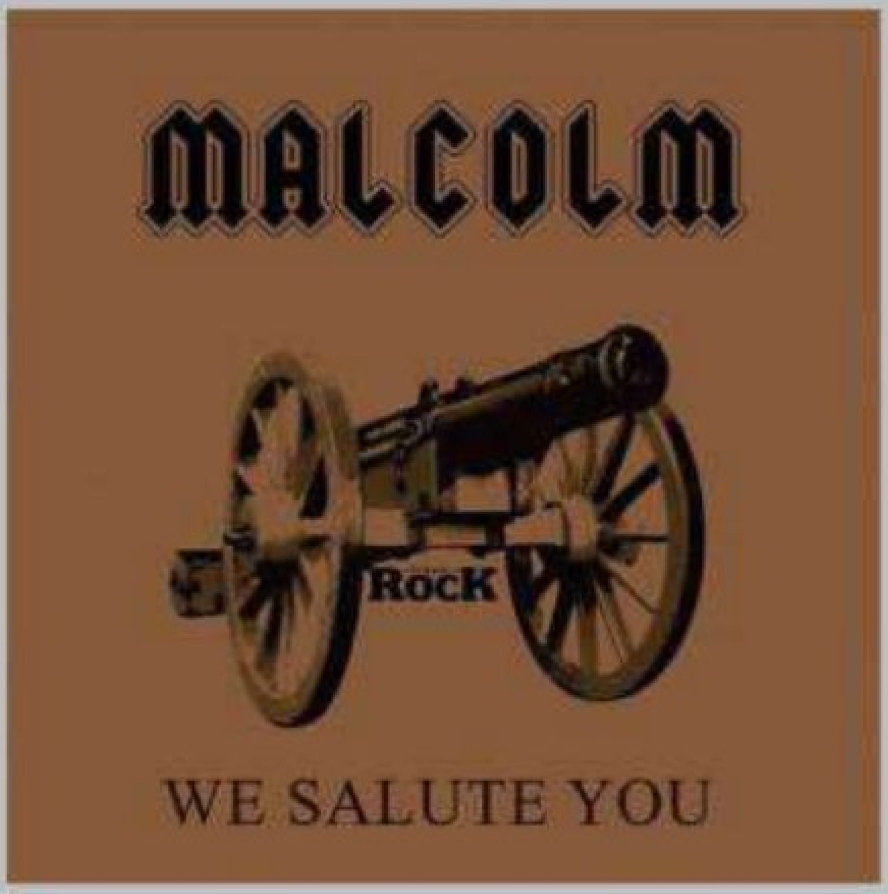

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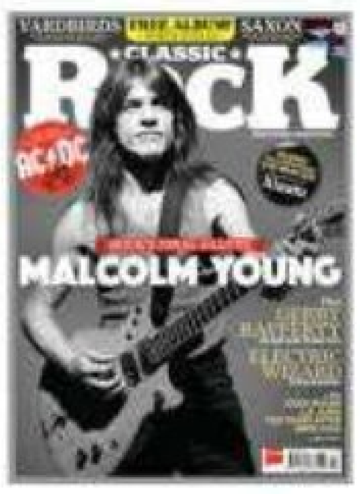
We'd *just* gone to press – and I'm talking no more than 36 hours here – with our End Of Year issue, when the news broke that we'd lost yet another one of rock's greatest architects, AC/DC's Malcolm Young. Despite him being absent from his band since April 2014, Malcolm's spirit was present at every show the band played since the cruel illness that forced his departure took hold. He was there in the riffs, the band's outlook, the precision, the simplicity... As much as brother Angus and Bon or Jonno were in the media spotlight, AC/DC was Malcolm's band. He was the man who called the shots, ruled the camp with a rod of iron. If Malcolm didn't green-light it, it didn't happen, simple as that.

As you may have gathered, AC/DC hold a special place at *Classic Rock* HQ. We each have our favourites, but they are one of only two bands (the other is Motörhead, in case you're curious) that the whole *CR* team agrees on. Put 'DC on the stereo and you'll get no complaints, other than a possible "Turn it up!" hollered from the other side of the room.

So this issue, along with musicians and readers, we pay tribute to the man who was the 'engine room' of AC/DC.

Malcolm, we salute you, sir.

Siân Llewellyn, Editor



THE COVER: MALCOLM YOUNG BY MICHAEL HALSBAND

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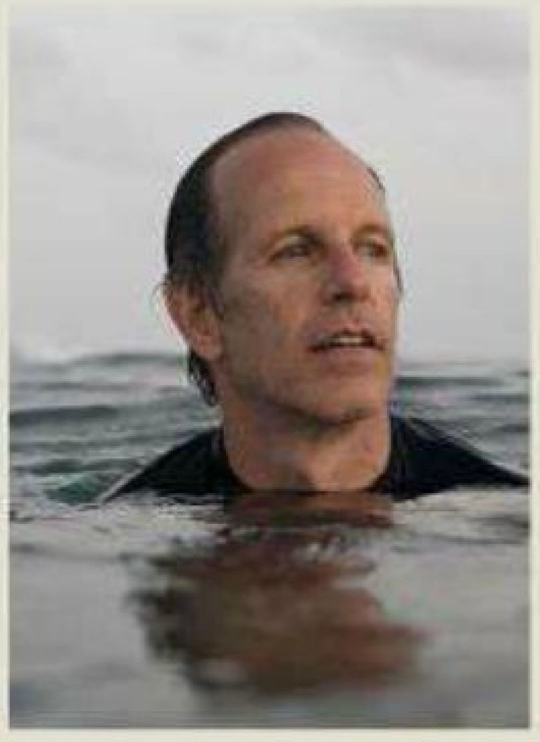
JOHNNY SHARP
Johnny made his name as a music writer in the 1990s, using the childhood nickname Johnny Cigarettes, for *NME*. He has since written books including *Crap Lyrics*, which contains no lines by Low Cut Connie, the piano-hammering rock'n'roll whirlwind he went to Brighton to see this month (p116). His work can be found at www.johnnysharp.net

WILL IRELAND
This month we sent Will to both ends of the country; first to Liverpool to shoot Queen + Adam Lambert (in all their pyrotechnic glory), then down to Brighton to party with Philadelphia's most exuberant Low Cut Connie (beer-mat-flipping and ketchup included... Probably best if you read the piece). See more of Will's work at willirelandphotography.co.uk



MICHAEL HALSBAND
New York photographer Michael Halsband took our brilliant cover shot of the late, great Malcolm Young. Since starting out at the end of the 70s, he's been on the road with the Rolling Stones, AC/DC and James Brown, shot album covers for Iggy Pop, among others, and had his work published in magazines from *Rolling Stone* to *Vogue*. See more at michaelhalsband.com

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All Guns blazing: Axl and the reunited GN'R return to Donington.

Halestorm blow into 2018's Ramblin' Man festival.

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12 Things We're Looking Forward To In 2018

The past 12 months have flown by, and what a year 2018 promises to be, with huge tours and festivals already confirmed, and our favourite artists preparing new music. Here's just some of what we're vibed up for...

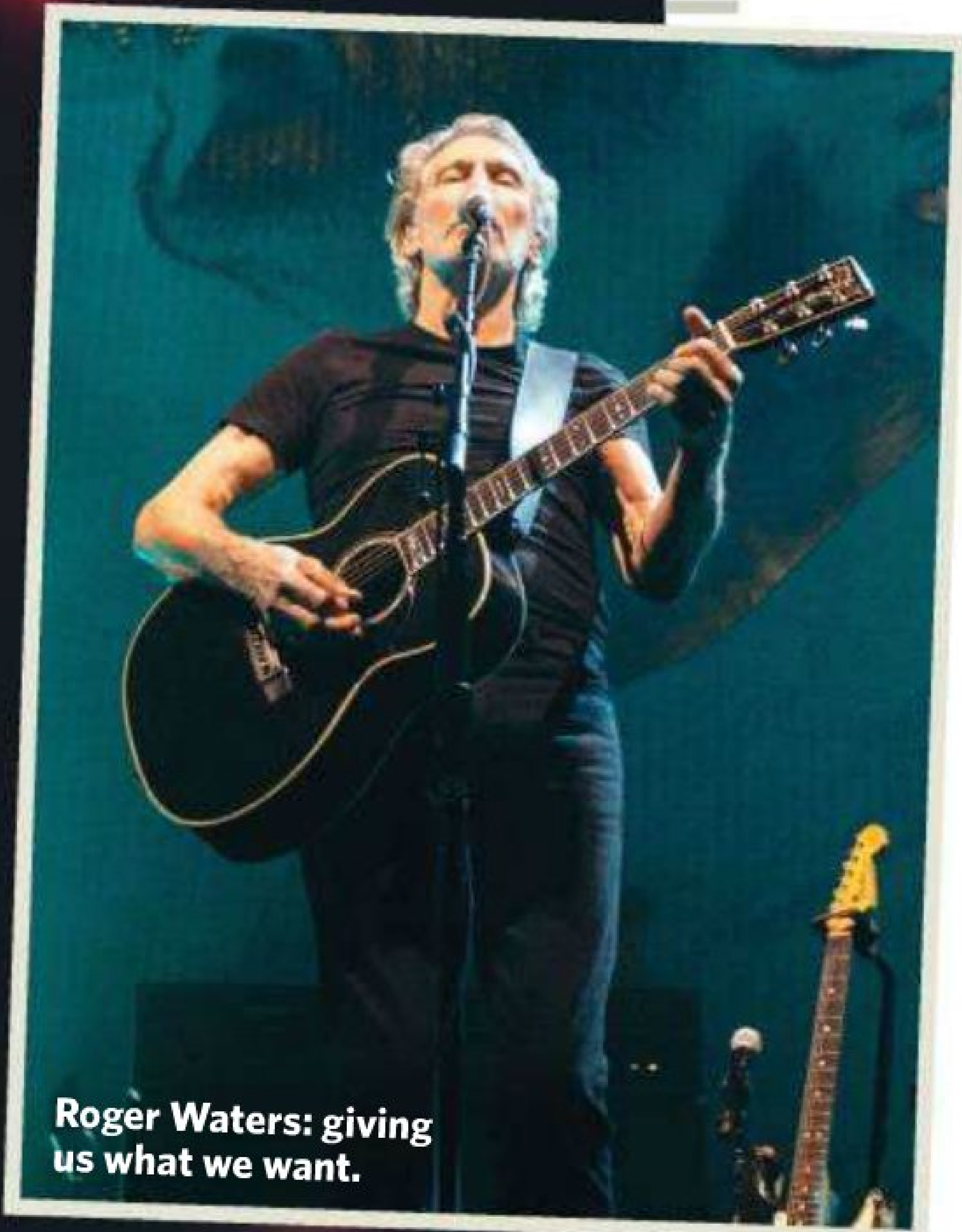
Ozzy: bowing out in style in.

Ozzy signs off at Download, with GN'R along for the ride

Sabbath may have called it a day as far as touring, but Ozzy is set to undertake at least one more lap of the globe. He and his latest solo band, with Zakk Wylde back on guitar for the first time since 2009, close Download Festival in June, where Ozzy is joined by co-headliners Guns N' Roses (Saturday) and Avenged Sevenfold (Friday). As usual the event takes place at Donington Park Racetrack, this year on June 8-10. The bill also includes Marilyn Manson, Bullet For My Valentine, The Hives and Body Count, with many, many more to be confirmed. Guns N' Roses return to Donington as part of the long-running Not In This Lifetime Tour that includes 13 outdoor shows across Europe.

Roger Waters gives us what we really want

Waters brings his critically acclaimed Us + Them tour to London's Hyde Park as part of the British Summer Time Festival on July 6. He also plays indoor dates in Glasgow (June 29), Liverpool (July 2) Manchester (3) and Birmingham (7). The show features songs from Pink Floyd's greatest albums, including *The Dark Side Of The Moon*, *The Wall*, *Animals* and *Wish You Were Here*, plus material from Waters's current solo album *Is This The Life We Really Want?*. The tour recently closed its North American leg to rave reviews.



Roger Waters: giving us what we want.

After bowing out in 2017, 'Slowhand' is back

A year ago we were mourning Eric Clapton's farewell tour. "This is it, no more," said the then 71-year-old. Well, it seems Eric still wants to play occasional shows (no wonder we said the end was "hard to believe"). Clapton plays the British Summer Time Festival on the Great Oak Stage for what will be his first show in Hyde Park since 2008. Support acts include Steve Winwood, Santana and Gary Clark Jr.

Ramblin' Man and Steelhouse festivals return

The great news for those who love both these festivals is that for the first time since 2014 they're on separate weekends. Yay! Headliners are yet to be announced, but the first acts booked for Ramblin' Man, at its usual home in Maidstone, Kent on June 30 and July 1, are the prog-metal supergroup Sons Of Apollo, Halestorm, Blackberry Smoke and Steve Earle & The Dukes, the latter playing a set based on Earle's much-loved album *Copperhead Road*.

Ever fancied attending a rock festival on top of a mountain? If so, the Steelhouse, which takes place in the Brecon Beacons in South Wales, is one for the diary. This year's line-up includes Black Star Riders, the Quireboys, King King, Stone Broken, Aaron Buchanan & The Cult Classics, Massive Wagons, Bad Flowers, Those Damn Crows and more. Pack your crampons and tent for July 27-29.

Scorpions' farewell tour continues

Is there any point in reminding you all that Klaus, Rudolf and the gang announced their farewell tour back in 2010? Well, eight years on it's still going, and for their only UK appearance of 2018 the Scorps co-headline the third annual Stone Free Festival, at London's O2 Arena over the weekend of June 16/17. Joining them on the Saturday (16th) are Megadeth. Twenty-four hours later, Yes featuring Jon Anderson, Trevor Rabin & Rick Wakeman top the bill, with support from former Supertramp frontman Roger Hodgson and Joanne Shaw Taylor.

Parfitt says: Over And Out

A final record from late Status Quo rhythm guitarist Rick Parfitt gets a posthumous release on March 23. Parfitt had virtually completed *Over And Out* before his death a year ago. Along with Alan Lancaster and John 'Rhino' Edwards, his son, Rick Parfitt Jnr, helped to complete the recordings, which also feature Queen's Brian May and Muse bassist Chris Wolstenholme. The music on the album is said to showcase "the purest rock and roll sound of early Status Quo records" as well as Parfitt's "softer side".

> **'Britrock Must Be Destroyed! is among the most intriguing tours of 2018.'**

Myles Kennedy unveils his solo debut

The singer with both Alter Bridge and Slash's solo band finally releases his debut album in the spring via Napalm Records. Produced by Michael 'Elvis' Baskette, *Year Of The Tiger* is a 12-song concept album inspired by Kennedy losing his father when he was a child. It includes the tracks *Ghost Of Shangri La*, *Love Can Only Heal* and *Devil On The Wall*.

Last summer Alter Bridge guitarist Mark Tremonti joked that Kennedy's album was "about eight years overdue". Asked about the music on it, he said: "From what I've heard it's less of an Alter Bridge-sounding rock'n'roll record and more in the vein of [his heroes] Chris Whitley and Jeff Buckley."

Look out for a live recording from Alter Bridge's two nights at the Albert Hall with the Parallax Orchestra too.

Ginger throws down the gauntlet; Pearl Jam fly in

A co-headline tour from Reef, The Wildhearts and Terrorvision, billed as Britrock Must Be Destroyed!, is among the most intriguing tours of 2018. Stoking up the fires of competition, Ginger Wildheart quipped of the May showdown: "We are honoured to be a part of this legendary tour. Mainly because it means that we're still alive, but also because it gives us a chance ▷

This month The Dirt was compiled by Mark Beaumont, Lee Dorrian, Dave Everley, Hugh Fielder, Polly Glass, Jamie Hibbard, Dave Ling, Luke Morton, Henry Yates

Stone Temple Pilots: flying again with new singer Jeff Gutt (second from left).

to prove that we were always the best band of this whole bunch."

Pearl Jam have confirmed a pair of dates at London's O2 Arena on June 18 and 19, and in the autumn Jeff Lynne takes his new-look Jeff Lynne's ELO around the country for eight indoor dates.

Comedy metallers Steel Panther are back, with Inglorious and Toby Jepson's new group Wayward Sons as support. The ubiquitous Ginger Wildheart is also out on the road again in February and March as special guest of the Levellers, while Brothers Osborne play their first UK headline tour in May.

Priest flex their Firepower, Stone Temple Pilots bounce back

Judas Priest recently launched a short but very sweet teaser clip of *Firepower*, their second studio album with guitarist Richie Faulkner. Expect it to be out in time for their slot at Bloodstock Festival on August 10.

Saxon's *Thunderbolt* is due on February 2, and with titles such as *Speed Merchants*, *Olympus Rising* and *They Played Rock 'N' Roll* there are no prizes for guessing what it sounds like.

Stone Temple Pilots have a new frontman, Jeff Gutt, who follows former frontmen Scott Weiland and Chester Bennington, both of whom are now no longer with us. Gutt (pronounced Goot) appears on STP's new single *Meadow*. An as-yet-untitled seventh album is released via Atlantic Records in early 2018.

It will be fascinating to see what The Damned turn in, with the legendary Tony Visconti producing and Paul Gray back on bass, while in the coming months Clutch are set to release a follow-up to 2015's *Psychic Warfare*.

Fish is making progress with *Weltschmerz* (the title means 'pain of the world'), the dark studio album that he claims will be his last, and that is followed by a final run of shows.

Some 14 years after their previous album, *eMOTIVe*, A Perfect Circle release something new in the coming months. If it's anything like teaser track *The Doomed*, count us in.

Joe Bonamassa and Beth Hart both have big years ahead. Bonamassa, who kicks things off with Black Country Communion, plays Hampton Court Palace Festival on June 12. Hart's commitments include a sold-out date at London's Royal Albert Hall on May 4. Together they have a new studio album, *Black Coffee*, out on January 26, followed by a live recording from a previous show at the Albert Hall.

Resistance of the Manics is futile

Manic Street Preachers release their first new recordings in four years on April 6, and play an eight-date arena tour of the UK. *Resistance Is Futile* is their thirteenth studio album. According to the band, its main themes are: "Memory and loss; forgotten history; confused reality and art as a hiding place and inspiration." Direction-wise, they say it's "obsessively melodic – in many ways referencing both the naive energy of *Generation Terrorists* and the orchestral sweep of *Everything Must Go*."

Michael Schenker Fest goes on the record

Following a tour with his former lead singers Gary Barden, Graham Bonnet and Robin McAuley, plus musicians from previous MSG line-ups (Chris Glen, Ted McKenna and Steve Mann), Schenker releases an album, *Resurrection*, that features them all, plus most recent singer Doogie White. Metallica guitarist Kirk Hammett guests on the album track *Heart And Soul*.

Phil Campbell And The Bastard Sons.

As implied by the title, *Resurrection* is a new start for the veteran guitarist. "After leaving UFO and the Scorpions I decided I only wanted to do small stuff," he explains. "Now my state of mind is different. Nothing scares me any more. Now I'm going to go for it."

The album is out on March 2 via Nuclear Blast.

Lots more new albums

After 80s radio rock-nodding indie youths The Xcerts ease us into 2018 with *Hold On To Your Heart* (January 19), as well as a new one from Monster Truck early in the year, Phil Campbell And The Bastard Sons release *The Age Of Absurdity* on January 26 via Nuclear Blast.

"We knew we had a great band, and just attempted to write the best songs we could," former Motörhead guitarist Campbell tells *Classic Rock*. "We went into recording with no theme as such, but listening to Neil's [Starr, vocalist] lyrics on the subject of the crazy world we live in led us to come up with the title *The Age Of Absurdity*. I think we definitely achieved what we set out to do, and we can't wait for people to hear it. We've already been playing *Freak Show*, *Dark Days* and *Ringleader* [at gigs]."

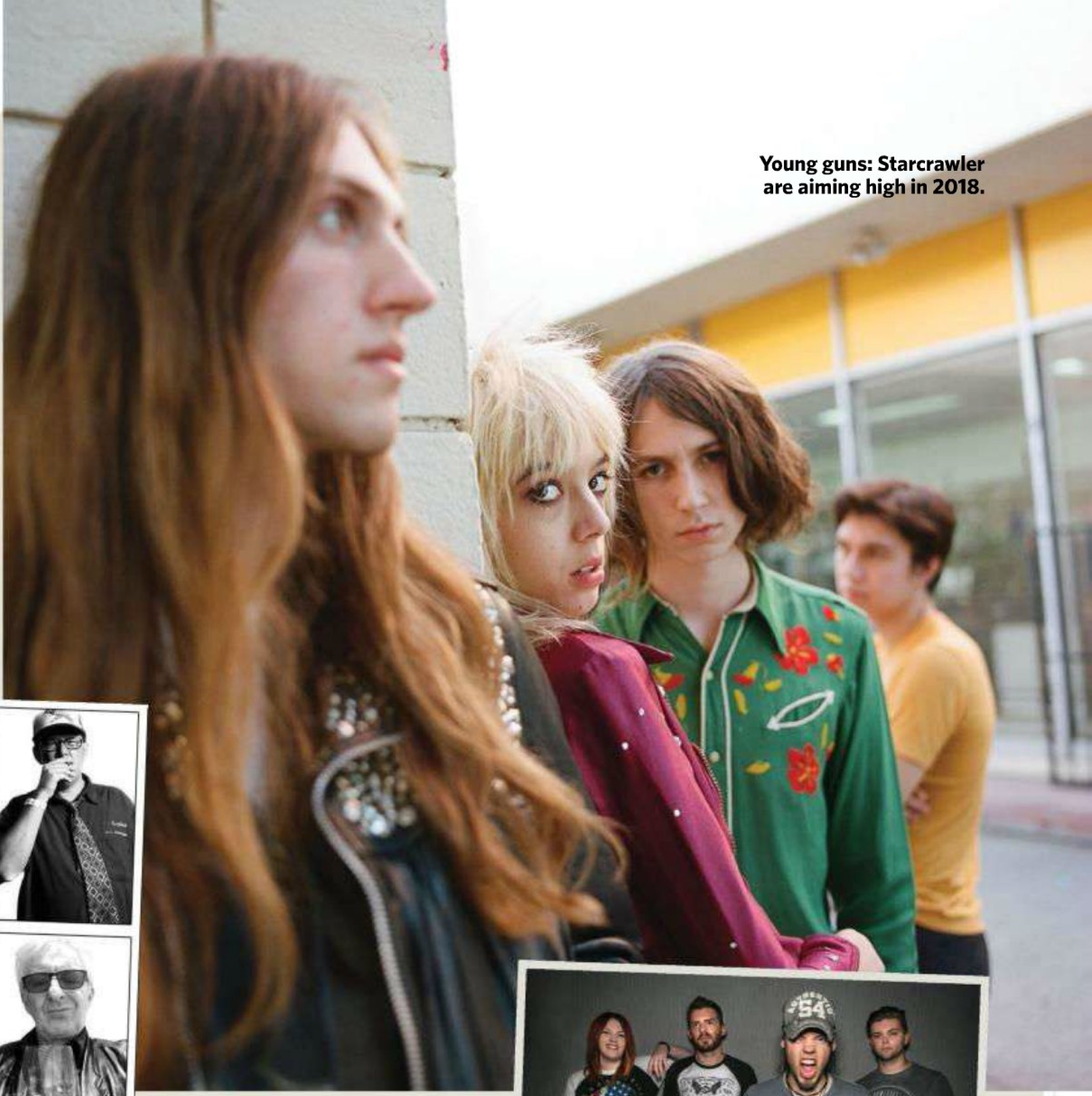
South African bluesy guitar virtuoso Dan Patlansky releases *Perfection Kills* on February 2, former Gaslight Anthem frontman Brian Fallon releases his solo album, *Sleepwalkers*, on February 9, and the third record from The Temperance Movement, *A Deeper Cut*, is out on February 16 via Earache.

March 9 sees the arrival of West Country rockers Tax The Heat's new album *Change Your Position* and Turbowolf's *The Free Life*. Pencilled in for around spring are also albums from Blackberry Smoke and the Vintage Caravan. And as we move on into late March/early April The Struts will be bringing shedloads of sequins and good-time tunes.

There are lots more still to be confirmed, but new records are expected from Shinedown, Wilson and Black Stone Cherry, with releases from Halestorm, The Answer frontman Cormac Neeson, Crobot, Hardcore Superstar and Zeal & Ardor to be confimed for the spring/later in 2018.

Ones To Watch In 2018

From bands who made themselves known in 2017, to those brand new to 2018, there's a healthy number of fresh faces to get excited about this year. Here are some we'll be watching out for.



Young guns: Starcrawler are aiming high in 2018.

Professor And The Madman

Doctor who? Professor And The Madman.

This was a pleasant surprise when it cropped up in our inbox. Professor And The Madman are a new band but the members are industry veterans: Alfie Agnew (Adolescents, D.I.), Sean Elliott (D.I., Mind Over Four), Rat Scabies (The Damned) and Paul Gray (The Damned, Eddie & The Hot Rods, UFO). So they're a total punk band, peddling an aged, possibly low-rent brand of the music they made their names with, right? Wrong.

New album *Disintegrate Me*, due for release on February 23 via Fullertone Records, is an infectious cocktail of power-pop/rock, 60s British Invasion and melodic psychedelia. It's rich, quality stuff. The band released two largely overlooked indie albums in 2016, but 2018 looks set to be the year they break into the rock sphere. Or they certainly deserve to, anyway. Here's hoping they come over here for some gigs.

KOYO

This young British progressive quintet created new, incendiary ground between Pink Floyd and Radiohead (plus moody touches of Opeth and My Bloody Valentine for good measure) with their self-titled debut in 2017. This year they're taking their formula to the masses in a major way, starting the new year with an appearance at January's Rockaway Festival. New single *Jettisoned* is due out in March, while in May they release the album *Live At RAK Studios*, available as limited-edition vinyl, CD and download. KOYO follow that with UK dates and summer festival appearances, after which they head to the US and Japan to tour in October. Oh, and they begin recording their second album as well.

KOYO: progressing their prog ambitions.

Starcrawler

They're sparky, spiky and disgustingly young, and just to rub it in they've got the chops to back it all up. We enjoyed 2017 singles *Ants*, *Let Her Be* and *I Love LA* – not to mention the band's blood-spattered live shows in London, spearheaded by gurning beanpole singer Arrow De Wilde (described, aptly, by *Classic Rock*'s Dave Everley as "what would have happened if Ozzy Osbourne and Patti Smith had got together sometime in 1975 and had a kid"). Now the LA punkoid rockers' self-titled debut album is set for release on January 19 via Rough Trade Records. Also, keep an eye out for details of gigs, at which there will likely be more blood-spattering and straitjacket antics.

Brothers Osborne

Continuing to prove that southern rock sells in large quantities on both sides of the Atlantic – and that it's *way* more than some novel cowboy-yokel niche – these Nashville gents filled London's Forum when they supported their pals The Cadillac Three in November. Listen to single *It Ain't My Fault* for a taste and you'll see why – it's fantastically likeable.

This year Brothers Osborne return under their own steam. Their new album is scheduled for release in the spring via Snakefarm Records, and they undertake a headline UK tour in May. "The UK has become one of our favourite places to play," enthuses John Osborne. "We're thrilled to be doing our first ever headline tour there in May. Can't wait!"

Nashvinlle sound: Brothers Osborne.

Stone Broken: riffy rockers.

Stone Broken

Recently signed to Spinefarm/Universal, these British hard rockers release their debut album, *Ain't Always Easy*, on March 2. Purveyors of the kind of riffy hard rock that worked so well for the likes of Black Stone Cherry, Stone Broken just might be one of the current crop of homegrown talent that make major progress in the coming year.

In February/March they tour the UK and Europe as headliners, joined by special guests Jared James Nichols and Bad Flowers.

More good ones to watch for…

Royal Blood-rivalling duo Rews are set to go on tour in March, Austin Gold celebrate their new album with UK shows in January, while Black Foxxes release *REIðI* on March 16 via Spinefarm. We'll also be keeping an eye on Wales' answer to Foo Fighters, Sonny Jim, who are "on a mission for 2018… to get heard" and are set to release a new album around September. We'll also be keeping an eye on *Classic Rock* Tracks Of The Week artists (on classicrockmagazine.com) such as Alice & The Lovers, The Cuckoos, James Cutlass & The Wisterias… Good things are coming, so keep your ears open.

RIP

Thank you and good night.

Chuck Mosley

December 26, 1959 – November 9, 2017

Faith No More have led the tributes to their former singer who has died, reportedly of a heroin overdose, at the age of 57. Mosley joined the San Franciscan alt.rock group in 1985. They called him a "reckless and caterwauling force of energy who delivered with conviction and helped set us on a track of uniqueness and originality".

Paul Buckmaster

June 13, 1946 – November 7, 2017

Paul Buckmaster was quite probably the greatest arranger in rock music, the Londoner's orchestral contributions having graced iconic recordings by a range of artists including David Bowie, Elton John, the Rolling Stones, Carly Simon, Harry Nilsson and Guns N' Roses over the course of almost 50 years. No cause of death has been revealed. He was 71.

Michael 'DikMik' Davies

Died November 16, 2017

Richmond-born Davies joined Hawkwind in 1969. Taking up "keyboards, audio generator, synthesiser and electronics", he remained with them until 1973. Hawks leader Dave Brock credits DikMik with persuading the band to allow Lemmy to join. "Goodbye old chap, your legend lives on," he says fondly of the 73-year-old, who died of cancer.

Johnny Hallyday

June 15, 1943 – December 6, 2017

Known as France's own Elvis, Jean-Philippe Léo Smet (the singer's real name) enjoyed a 50-year career in his homeland. He recorded songs written by Mick Jones in pre-Foreigner days and was backed by both Peter Frampton and the Small Faces, while Jimmy Page played on some of his earliest records. Hallyday had fought a battle with lung cancer. He was 74 years old.

David Cassidy

April 12, 1950 – November 21, 2017

The 1970s heartthrob has lost a battle with dementia at the age of 67. Cassidy first found fame in the TV show *The Partridge Family*. Following a run of hit singles he retired from touring in 1974, but he continued to record and act. He returned to the charts with *The Last Kiss* in 1985, and later married songwriter Sue Shifrin.

NEWS

King King have parted company with their long-time keyboard player Bob Fridzema. His replacement is Jonny Dyke, who previously played with Elkie Brooks and James Morrison.

Laurence Jones releases a new studio album, *The Truth*, on Friday 9th March 9. The 25-year old blues-rock guitarist and singer/songwriter plays London's Borderline on January 23, with a seven-date tour in May. It includes the tracks What *Would You Do, Can't Go On Without You* and *Keep me Up At Night*.

Bon Jovi have won a fan vote to help select this year's inductions to the Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame. The New Jersey band received 1,162,098 votes to beat the Moody Blues (947,726), Dire Straits (613,726), The Cars (552,707) and Judas Priest (538,467). However, the result does not guarantee inclusion, although it does put them on a very strong footing. Since the fan vote was introduced in 2013, its winners – Rush, Kiss, Stevie Ray Vaughan, Chicago and Journey – have all gone on to be inducted.

Universal Music release a 45th-anniversary deluxe boxed set of the first, self-titled album from **Roxy Music** (pictured) on February 2. Available as both a four- and two-disc collection, it adds demos, out-takes, radio sessions, rare footage and a 136-page book. The original album has been remixed in 5.1 by Steven Wilson.

Rock in the post-Weinstein world

Polly Glass looks at the challenges facing our music.

The world of rock'n'roll, as covered by titles such as ours, is essentially a niche one. Ours is a safe, comparatively closed-off haven of specialist knowledge and interest, where it really is all about the music and the people who make it. That said, there are times when it's right that we reach into the wider world.

As we begin a new year, the debate over abuse and harassment has come to a head. And that has filtered increasingly into the rock'n'roll world. The case of disgraced film mogul Harvey Weinstein (called out for a host of alleged harassments, abuses and rape) started out as a Hollywood issue, but it's opened up into something much bigger. Weinstein might be Hollywood-specific, but powerful men abusing their positions isn't. Of course, it's #NotAllMen who perpetuate this unsavoury side of rock culture. Of course there are scores of talented, lovely guys in the industry – on stage and off – who have nothing to fear from the post-Weinstein climate. But that doesn't mean we should dismiss the issue of those who do.

So much of rock'n'roll has been built on the 'rock star/groupie' dynamic. This idea that women are essentially there to be in thrall of guys (and/or to service them in some way) has been entrenched in rock from the beginning, affecting female musicians, fans at concerts, crew members and more. When the likes of all-girl band The Slits challenged this status quo back in the 70s, the reaction from many was one of horror. Slits guitarist Viv Albertine recalled her band being feared just for behaving as any male rock band would. "We weren't played on the radio because of our name," she said, "we were locked in hotel rooms, not allowed out by managers – we weren't allowed in the foyer or bar on our tours because of how we looked and the way we behaved… We were treated like terrorists!"

'Harassment has come to a head, filtering into rock.'

More recently artists such as Larissa Stupar, frontwoman with metal band Venom Prison, have spoken out against the treatment they've experienced – and the silence that has prevailed over these issues for years. "Because not many [women] were speaking out about their experiences, the majority of people just weren't aware of it being a real problem," she told Teamrock.com. "The majority [of metal music fans] are rarely affected by it because they have the privilege of being men, but just because nobody talked about it doesn't mean it didn't happen."

So what kind of allegations are we looking at? You may have read about all four members of Polish metal band Decapitated being charged with rape. Or Real Estate guitarist Matt Mondanile's dismissal from the band after allegations of inappropriate behaviour towards women. Marilyn Manson bassist Twiggy Ramirez was accused of rape and domestic violence by musician Jessicka Addams. Manson has now split with Ramirez (real name Jeordie White).

We're also dealing with a densely embedded range of examples of unacceptable conduct against female musicians, fans, journalists, PRs and others. So perhaps abuse is more insidious in rock'n'roll than it is in Hollywood. The scope for sexual abuse is so deeply entrenched that we've accepted it as 'part of the deal' for years. "People are told it's 'all part of the industry, this is just the way the world works'" journalist Rachel Grace Almeida told Teamrock.com. "So you just have to shut the fuck up and take it unless you want to be seen as the liability. You always have to protect someone else in order to protect yourself in the music industry."

Initiatives like the Good Night Out campaign – "dedicated to helping the night-time economy deal with, tackle and prevent harassment" – are challenging and raising awareness of problems such as this. "If you're a man and you'd like to make a difference, there's so much you can do [to encourage change]," founder Bryony Beynon told Teamrock.com. "At its root, this is about women and gender-non-conforming people being devalued. So simple cultural changes can be huge. Challenge sexist stereotypes wherever you see them. Challenge your mates on their sexist banter."

Rock'n'roll is supposed to be about enjoyment, liberation, even escape from everyday stresses. No one should have to silently endure abuse or harassment for fear of being considered weak or "a liability", in this industry or anywhere else. Which would surely be a lot easier if such behaviour stopped occurring in the first place. And as more and more perpetrators are called out, making it harder for abusive, disrespectful acts to slip under the radar, hopefully the universal mind-set will change in a meaningful way.

ROXY MUSIC: GETTY

Back Issues: StoreMags.Com

NEWS

Another One Bites The Dust

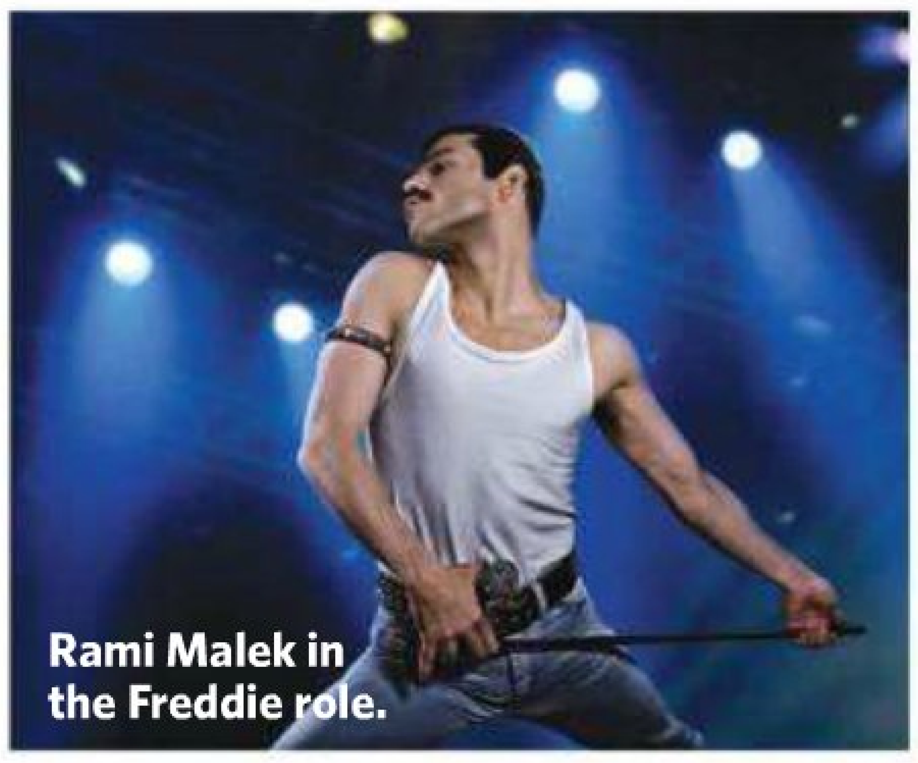
Director of Queen's Freddie Mercury biopic is axed.

As this issue went to press, Bryan Singer, the director of the Freddie Mercury biopic *Bohemian Rhapsody*, had been fired for what the BBC termed an alleged "pattern of unreliable behaviour on the set" two weeks before the film's completion in London. Singer, probably best known for his work on the X-Men series, has been replaced by Dexter Fletcher, who previously had been lined up for the job but was let go in 2014.

Singer's sacking is the latest of many problems that Queen's Brian May and Roger Taylor, two of the film's co-producers, have had to deal with since the idea was first mooted.

Singer issued a statement which confirmed an on-set bust-up with lead actor Rami Malek (pictured), but denied that the dispute had made their relationship untenable. It was claimed that Singer had sought time off on health grounds, and also to care for "a gravely ill parent".

Despite the numerous problems and delays, 20th Century Fox insist that *Bohemian Rhapsody* will debut as planned in December 2018. **DL**



Rami Malek in the Freddie role.

Desperate Dan

Fagen sues Becker's estate for Steely name ownership.

A legal battle has broken out between Donald Fagen and the estate of Walter Becker, his partner in Steely Dan for 50 years, over the ownership of the band's name. After Becker died last September at the age of 67, Fagen undertook a host of Steely Dan live commitments without his co-founder. He has yet to reveal whether or not Steely Dan are to continue. During a show at London's O2 Arena he announced: "We are the Steely Dan organisation. A little different than we were a few months ago but I've got to live with that."

Upon returning to the US, Fagen used a signed Buy/Sell agreement made with Becker in 1972 to claim the shares of his late partner. Becker's representatives called the move "unwarranted and frivolous". It claimed that the agreement "was not in effect at the time of Walter's death", that the suit was "riddled with half-truths and omissions".

Separately, Fagen is also suing Steely Dan's business management, alleging that they withheld information including royalty statements and income records. **DL**

The **Eagles** seem set to continue, with Deacon Frey replacing his father Glenn who died in 2016. The current line-up has Don Henley, Joe Walsh and Timothy B Schmit joined by Vince Gill and Frey Jr. The band recently added 13 extra dates to their current North American tour.

Yes are to hold a weekend of celebrations in London to mark the group's 50th anniversary over the weekend of March 24 and 25, coinciding with their shows at the London Palladium. Sponsored by *Classic Rock*'s sister title *Prog*, these include a fan convention. It will be attended by both current members of the band and Yes alumni from the past.

Fish, **Al Stewart** and the **Levellers** are among the first wave of acts to be confirmed for Fairport Convention's annual **Cropredy Festival**, which this year takes place in Oxfordshire between August 9 and 11. Fairport themselves will open and close the show with a pair of unplugged and electric performances.

A new album of previously unreleased **Jimi Hendrix** (pictured) tracks, titled *Both Sides Of The Sky*, is released on March 9. Although bootlegged in the past, this is the first time Jimi's 1969 writing session, which includes contributions from Stephen Stills, will have been available officially. Indeed 10 of its 13 songs have never been available before. The track *Things I Used To Do* features guitarist Johnny Winter.

WELCOME BACK

Corrosion Of Conformity

With a new album and their best-known line-up back together, hopefully a hurricane won't blow it apart again.

Corrosion Of Conformity are the Deep Purple of American metal. At least in terms of personnel turnover – since their formation in the early 80s they've had six different singers alone.

The North Carolina band's new album, *No Cross No Crown*, sees the return of their best-known line-up, with singer Pepper Keenan appearing on a COC album for the first time since 2005 alongside guitarist Woody Weatherman, bassist Mike Dean and drummer Reed Mullins. Keenan reveals what it's like being back on the COC team sheet.

> "Our standards were high. It needed to be real."

After ten years away, why did you re-joined Corrosion Of Conformity in 2015?
I quit trying to figure this crap out a long time ago. It was just timing, as simple as that. If you're writing music, or playing music from your heart, you sometimes go in different directions. Reed called me up on the phone, asking what I was doing. He had downtime, I had downtime, it just lined up.

Why did you leave in the 00s?
It was mainly Hurricane Katrina. That came and threw everything sideways. We had a whole European tour cancelled, we got left without a record label, everything kind of fizzled out.

COC released two albums with bassist Mike Dean singing. Did you ever have a conversation about getting back together to do something?
We did, but I was doing [stoner metal supergroup] Down stuff. And that was pretty epic. Those guys are fully capable of carrying on as a three-piece. I was being creative, they were being creative. But the chapter was never closed on COC. I knew we had more in us.

The new album's title, *No Cross No Crown*, seems to take a disparaging view of religion.
[Laughing] You think? We were playing somewhere in England. It was this decommissioned church that had been turned into an arts place. We were in the dressing room, and I looked up at the stained-glass window. It had some guy getting persecuted, and it said: 'No Cross, No Crown'. There's some validity in that statement. Let's get back to being humans – the cross and the crown have done enough damage.

What was the plan at first?
I knew that our standards were high. We couldn't just go in and bullshit. It needed to be real. That was the starting point.

Reed Mullins left the band briefly in 2016 after suffering an alcohol-induced seizure. How is he doing?
That was way overblown. He didn't leave the band. He collapsed. He figured his shit out and was back in three shows.

Corrosion Of Conformity's best known song is probably *Vote With A Bullet*, which came out in 1991.
I wrote that after being in hospital when I broke a bone. I was left with a fifteen-thousand-dollar hospital bill. I was mad at the world, and it didn't take much to write that. **DE**

No Cross No Crown is released on January 12 via Nuclear Blast.

JIMI HENDRIX: GETTY; BOHEMIAN RHAPSODY STILL: NICK DELANEY/20TH CENTURY FOX

OLIVIA JOHNSTON/PRESS

> "Some bands are more concerned with how their mascara looks than whether their guitars are in tune..."

★ HIGH HOPES

Austin Gold

Classic seventies blues-rock passed through the prism of post-Millennial Peterborough.

"I've noticed at a couple of the London gigs we've played that some other bands on the bill have been more concerned with how their mascara looks than whether their guitars are in tune," observes Austin Gold guitarist Jack Cable.

So, not much glam rock about Austin Gold then. And they're not from inside the M25 either – Peterborough, actually. But the quintet have set metropolitan ears waggling with their first album, *Before Dark Clouds*; ten fresh updates from the Bad Company textbook of rock, delivered with as much analogue power as you can muster on a CD and a bristling maturity that takes most bands three or four albums to acquire. Don't think of it as a dad-rock re-write, however; one review hailed them as "a bluesy Foo Fighters", a description that appeals to singer/guitarist David James Smith. "It shows we're getting somewhere".

Austin Gold started out four years ago when various musicians from the local scene got together for some light-hearted 'Hendrix and blues' jamming sessions that took on a purpose when Smith started bringing in song ideas for them to work on. "At first I was inspired by guys like Joe Bonamassa and then people from Pink Floyd to Whitesnake to Gerry Rafferty," says Smith.

"None of us were blues players," explains Cable. "Our influences were quite diverse, from heavy rock to pop. But we could all contribute to David's songs." To prove it, the band share songwriting credits.

They rechristened themselves Austin Gold ("A name I'd had lying around for years," says Smith, "catchy but not specific"), built up their sound around Smith and Cable's twin guitar dynamic and Russell Hill's contrasting keyboards. There was some resistance around their East Anglian stomping ground where they like their covers, but as they ventured northwards they found audiences more receptive.

When they reached Leeds they bumped into an old mate, Andy Hawkins who'd been working as a producer/engineer with the Damned, the Twang, Maxïmo Park and Ginger from the Wildhearts. "He had a beautiful studio up there and we knew he had a great pair of ears so we rang him up and got a price," says Smith. With no record deal, the subsidy came from their fans.

"We thought we'd edited out all the frivolities. But Andy found another layer to strip away and get back to the song," says bassist Lee Churchill. "We never challenged him because he knew what he was doing. The only discussions we had were over tempos."

After a local BBC session, Norfolk label Jigsaw Music pounced. Now they're all spruced-up and ready to rock, especially Smith, newly shorn of his stoner-length hair. "It didn't fit the synergy of the band," he says. "And my baby daughter kept pulling on it." **HF**

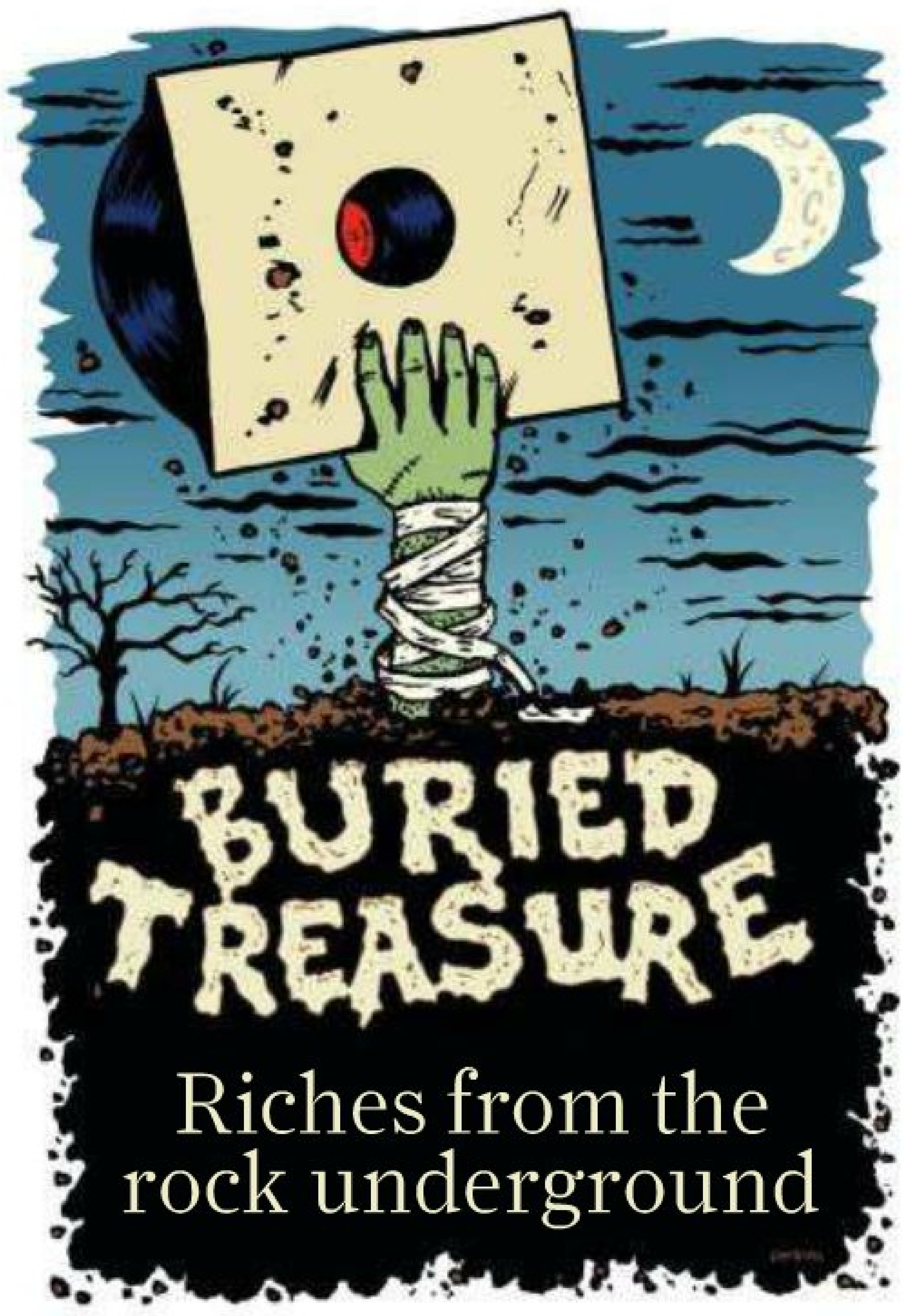
Before Dark Clouds is out now via Jigsaw Music. Austin Gold tour the UK from January 14 to 18.

FOR FANS OF...

BAD CO

"If you're going for the classic rock angle, it has to be Bad Company," says David James Smith. "I mean, we'll pick up on all kinds of stuff, but it actually all comes back to them. You can argue forever about your favourite album but I'll always go with their classic self-titled debut."

Back issues: Storemags.com



BANCHEE

Banchee, Atlantic, USA, 1969, £80

Originating from Long Island, with connections to Boston, Banchee formed at the tail end of 1968. Full of melody and eclectic ideas ranging from psychedelia to blues, folk, orchestral and early hard rock, they released this excellent yet overlooked album for Atlantic the following year.

Every band member contributed a few complete original tracks to the pot, which makes the album come across slightly unevenly as a whole. However, each track is well crafted, from the wonderfully gentle and ethereal beginnings of opener *The Night Explodes*, which explodes into a massive melodic chorus, to the glorious fuzz-fest of *Evolmia*. That's followed by the instantly catchy, guitar-driven heavy power-pop of *I Just Don't Know*. Vocals throughout the album are shared by all four members to great harmonious effect.

Follow The Dream is perhaps the most reflective piece, which builds to a majestic 'dreamlike' mid-section aided by a horn and string arrangement. However, it's the eight-minute-plus *Tom's Island* that displays the most progressive ambition. During the latter four minutes of the track, they lock into an enduring, heavy riff.

'Each track is well crafted, with great harmonious vocals.'

Not much is known about the general success or touring activity of Banchee, but the album was, unfortunately, a common sight in bargain bins across the country.

Following a two-year gap, they released an excellent second album for Polydor, titled *Thinkin'*, which has an overall harder-edged rock sound. While maybe less eclectic in style than their debut, it's equally worthy of investigation. **LD**

NEWS

Jim Steinman's **Bat Out Of Hell – The Musical** is to have a four-month residency in London next year. The show's second run in the capital is at the Dominion Theatre from April 2 to July 28.

The **Isle Of Wight Festival** celebrates its 50th anniversary this year. **Depeche Mode**, **Liam Gallagher**, **Van Morrison**, **The Killers** and **Kasabian** are so far confirmed for the bill for this year's event which takes place on June 21-24.

Tax The Heat's second album, *Change Your Position*, is released on March 9 via Nuclear Blast. The follow-up to their debut *Fed To The Lions*, it will be preceded by the single *Money In The Bank*.

The three instrumentalists in **Dokken**'s most popular line-up – guitarist George Lynch, bassist Jeff Pilson and drummer 'Wild' Mick Brown – have formed a new band called Super Stroke with Warrant's singer Robert Mason. An album is expected later in 2018.

Nick Mason of Pink Floyd, Rick Wakeman and Jools Holland are among the ambassadors for **Learn To Play Day**, an initiative that encourages prospective musicians to pick up an instrument for the first time. Over the weekend of March 17-19, more than 100 participating UK music shops and venues will provide free music lessons. LTPD is now into its seventh year. For details go to www.learntoplayday.com

BRMC: TESSA ANGUS/PRESS

WELCOME BACK

Black Rebel Motorcycle Club

BRMC return with eighth album *Wrong Creatures* – despite setbacks that would have finished many a band.

Brain surgery, rumoured rehab and a creative process bassist Robert Levon Been has described as "drowning in fire". It sounds as though Black Rebel Motorcycle Club had a turbulent time making their eighth album, *Wrong Creatures*. Yet what they've captured is a psych-noir carnival of sound. For all its characteristically dark talk of ghosts, bones and lost faith, it's the band's most varied, expansive and colourful album to date. Guitarist Peter Hayes exposes its underbelly.

Drummer Leah Shapiro underwent brain surgery in 2014. How did that impact on the making of the new album?

It put everything on hold. It didn't feel right to start writing while she was in recovery or waiting for the surgery to happen. She was in a rehearsal and she got some drumstick in her eye. She went to get that checked out, and the guy noticed something wrong with her reactions. So she got an MRI and they found she had something called a chiari malformation, that you're born with. Your brain is too big for your skull and it starts blocking off your spinal flow. She had to have surgery to get that fixed.

Why did you crowdfund the surgery?

We didn't, a fan did. It still put her in a shit-ton of debt. As far as insurance in the US, they still managed to try to not pay for it. The whole system is maddening.

Was the delay responsible for reigniting your personal drug issues?

I've been battling it off and on. It's not just a rock'n'roll thing – doctors, lawyers, everybody goes through struggles with it.

Is it true you ended up in rehab?

I'm working through that stuff, like anybody should try to if it's affecting your life. You can try to get away with the lie a bit longer in music, but it's the same lie.

You've said the record is a "conversation with death".

A better way of putting it is it's a conversation with the self you expect yourself to be and the reality of who you are – trying to revise and rethink yourself as life goes on. Both me and Rob grew up with religion, and once it's introduced into your life it's pretty fucking hard to get out of your system. How do you deal with it on the inside if it's already kind of infected you? How do you live life without someone else's opinion of how it's supposed to work and come up with your own? Even trying to ditch science's opinion – what do I really fucking think?

"I'm not sure making an album is supposed to be painless."

There are hints of *Walk On The Wild Side* on the track *Echo*.

There's a rip-off of that in there, yeah. Every record is kinda what you're left with. You go through all the ideas and at the end there's songs that finish themselves and are finished. In theory it should all be easy and fun-loving, right? I don't remember an album being horribly easy! There's always battles. I come out of every record thinking: "How do we make this easier on ourselves and not go down a rabbit hole of beating the shit out of ourselves and questioning everything to the point of insanity?" I'm not sure it's supposed to be painless. **MB**

Wrong Creatures is out on January 12 via Vagrant Records.

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Sharp Dressed Man

Rock 'n' Roll accessories

This month, @jamiehibbard is elegantly wasted in these three sartorial stand-outs.

Hiut Selvedge Denim SkinR Skinny Fit

We've been following Hiut denim's progress since they started out five years ago with the heady notion to get the small town of Cardigan in Wales to start making jeans again. They've gone from strength to strength off the back of that idea in the intervening years, and now make some of the finest jeans you could hope to buy. This skinny-fit cut is still our favourite.

£230 @HiutDenim
HiutDenim.co.uk

Momocreatura Hole In Heart rabbit ring

This finely hand-carved ring from London jewellers Momocreatura is definitely one for the macabre among us, featuring a rabbit with a hole in its heart and a hint of blood around the wound. Bless him. The piece is so well made – as are all of Momocreatura's creations – that it's more like a tiny sculpture on your finger. There are rings with a range of other animals available too.

£169 @Momocreatura
Momocreatura.com

Health and Death Treaty tee

This new T-shirt brand is looking to mess with people's heads. And we like that. We also like the Nordic rune-inspired designs with their own 'hellphabet'.

£22 @HealthandDeath
DontBeBored.today

NEWS

A new survey suggests that only a quarter of young gig-goers would like mobile phones to be banned at gigs. When ticket website Skiddle asked music fans between the ages of 16 and 30 about the subject, 20 per cent said they were unhappy about their view of the artists being blocked, while just eight per cent said that filming and taking photographs was disrespectful to the band/artist.

The **Dan Reed Network** are planning to record their next album in 10 different cities. The band recently laid down a track called *Fade To Light* in front of a group of fans at Blue Print Studios in Manchester. Their most recent full-length album was the reunion collection *Fight Another Day* in 2016.

A new mental health hotline offering support for those in the music industry has been launched. **Music Minds Matter** can be reached on 0808 802 8008 and operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week. A recent study revealed that musicians are three times more likely to be afflicted by depression than other members of the public.

Plans to broadcast **Roger Waters**'s (pictured) summer shows in Berlin and Cologne have been scrapped in response what has been described as accusations of anti-semitism. As a member of the Boycott, Divestment And Sanctions (BDS) movement, Waters has long spoken out against artists who play in Israel.

WELCOME BACK

Machine Head

Charlottesville, Trump and the chip on Rob Flynn's shoulder are all fuel for aptly titled new album *Catharsis*.

California's Machine Head have been a bastion of heavy metal for more than two decades, with big riffs, big grooves and empowering lyrics. Formed from the ashes of Bay Area thrashers Vio-lence back in 1991, they've grown into one of the most respected, yet underrated, bands in heavy music.

In the four years since previous album *Bloodstone & Diamonds*, the societal and political landscape has undergone vast changes, and that's precisely where vocalist Robb Flynn's cross-hairs are pointing for the band's new album, *Catharsis*.

How did the writing process for *Catharsis* go?

The first month we started writing was just magical, everything we wrote was gold. Then six weeks later everything was garbage! I went through a phase of hating everything I wrote; everything was a horrible Fiona Apple ballad. I didn't know what was going on! Songs about sex and spiders. It was ridiculous.

> **"The new album track *Volatile* is a raw burst of fury and frustration."**

This record feels more overtly political than previous ones.

Volatile was written and recorded on the day of the Charlottesville murders. We were in the studio watching this shit unfold and I was really affected by it. I watched that car pummel through that girl like: "What the fuck is going on?!" I wrote lyrics in about twenty minutes, then I went and sang it. Music is a snapshot of somebody's head-space, and you got a raw burst of fury, confusion and frustration."

Why did you feel the need to drop racial slurs into the song *Bastards*?

That song came from a conversation with my two boys the day after the election. It was a really intense and difficult conversation, and I ended up writing a poem. When I was done, I started playing guitar and singing the chorus, put it on YouTube and that was it. I got out what I needed to say in vulgar terms, used the language that I was hearing 'them' use against others. As the record evolved, the idea of standing your ground kept popping up and became a tie-in to the whole record. It felt right to do and right to say; it was, and still is, a confusing time.

Why are you continuing the An Evening With shows [long gigs without a support act].

Metal has this buffet mentality where we expect it to be a five-band package or 160 bands at a festival. When Springsteen comes to town, nobody's going: "Who's Springsteen bringing with him?" A lot of people tried to talk us out of An Evening With, but it was the best thing we ever did. We felt revitalised as a band, because we could play these songs we normally wouldn't in a support or festival slot. This is the way we're going to do it for quite some time."

After twenty-five years of Machine Head, are you happy?

I've got a chip on my shoulder – I don't feel like we get our due. From time to time I think: "When is the respect going to kick in?" But I've been able to make a living from playing music for twenty-five years, which I am very grateful for. We're never going to be as big as Metallica. We're an upper-mid-tier metal band and I don't need more than that. We've had a career that started pretty high and over time has gone up a little bit. It's not the arc of most bands twenty-five years later. **LM**

Catharsis is out on January 26 via Nuclear Blast

★ HIGH HOPES

Neon Animal

The glammed-up punk'n'roll Londoners are here to light up the rock scene.

You can't miss Mark Thorn. He's the one in the cowboy hat and glittery crop top. The one thrusting his pelvis and winking at your girlfriend. After five minutes on the front row, you'll either declare Neon Animal's prancing mouthpiece the greatest frontman since Jagger – or step up to throttle him.

"Maybe some girls' boyfriends are a bit jealous," shrugs Thorn. "It's quite a sexualised performance – that's just the way my body reacts to music. My goal is basically to keep people's attention, so nobody goes to the toilet during our set."

With Thorn at the helm, Neon Animal's rise since late-2015 has rarely been dull – even if the singer admits it's almost been deadly. "I've played for narrow-minded rockabilly audiences, where I got the impression they're looking at me thinking, 'Who's this guy and why is he wearing those trousers?' One time in Paris, our guitarist got strangled by a sumo-sized security guard. His voice has never gone back to normal. This gorilla could have killed him. I had to stop our guitarist from trying to burn the place down afterwards."

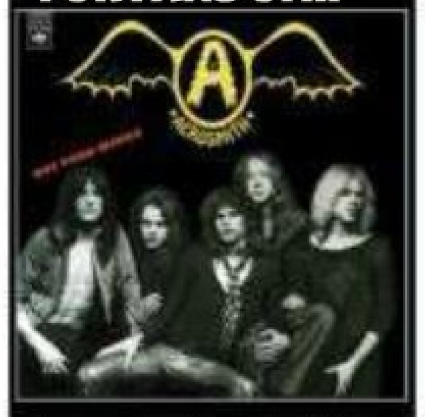
Don't dismiss the Londoners as mere rabble-rousers, though. Debut album *Bring Back Rock'N'Roll From The Dead* offers tunes to accompany the trousers, splicing the vibe of CBGBs and the Viper Room, fusing grade-A sleaze hooks and punk'n'roll sensibilities with Thorn's darkly witty vocals. "There's been times I've overindulged in certain things and I wanted to escape from that," says the frontman of opener *I'm Killing Myself And Everyone Else Is Helping Me*. "So that song could be about an addict. He's trying to get free, but all of his so-called friends, they're just saying, 'Come on, have another drink'. So it's almost like they're giving him a gun."

As for the shout-it-back title track, Thorn considers it a gauntlet hitting the deck. "I suppose that's a love song to rock'n'roll, but it's also a challenge to other bands, almost like an incantation. Rock'n'roll has maybe become a bit stagnant or lost some of its magic, in comparison to the music that initially got me into it. I've seen a lot of today's bands, and I dunno… there just seems to be something missing. It's almost like they just have one type of song. Over the years, it's become, like, you have to do this formula, or it's about wearing your Jack Daniel's T-shirt – which to me has absolutely nothing to do with it at all."

Even more than being a great frontman, you get the sense that Thorn wants to lead a rock band that matters. "Put it this way – we don't want to just be like a recycled band," he nods. "We want to be a great rock'n'roll band, like the ones that I've admired myself – but with our own identity as well. I'm not trying to close any doors, artistically. Whether it's true or not, I don't want to believe that the book has already been written." **HY**

Bring Back Rock'N'Roll From The Dead is out now via neonanimal.bandcamp.com.

FOR FANS OF…



"I was feeling the CBGB albums - and then there's early Aerosmith. I love *Get Your Wings*. It's got everything. It's got the cheeky *Pandora's Box* full of innuendos, and then the more trippy moments. And the way it comes in on *Same Old Song And Dance*. It's just such a sassy, great number, with a wonderful horn section."

"Rock'n'roll has lost some of its magic. A Jack Daniel's T-shirt has nothing to do with it."

Ten Years After

I'm Going Home

How a jobbing blues rock band were inspired by the live anthem of touring mates Fleetwood Mac… and came up with a defining moment of Woodstock.

Words: **Rob Hughes**

History tends to reduce 1969's Woodstock festival to a core set of signifiers. Take your pick from a kaftan-wearing Richie Havens barking out *Freedom*, The Who laying waste *Summertime Blues*, a "scared shitless" CSNY, Sly & The Family Stone grooving through the early hours, Country Joe McDonald leading *The Fish Cheer*, or Jimi Hendrix reclaiming *The Star-Spangled Banner* for hippies everywhere.

Then there's Ten Years After, the Midlands four-piece who arrived at Max Yasgur's farm as a hard-grafting blues-rock combo and left as international superstars. Their lift-off point came on the final evening of the event, when they closed their show with a titanic version of *I'm Going Home*, a rock'n'roll epic that simmered and boiled over 11 grandstanding minutes. At its centre was Alvin Lee, whose finger-blurring fretwork earned him the unofficial status of the fastest guitarist alive.

It was a moment captured in all its glory in Michael Wadleigh's *Woodstock* movie, released the following year. "It put us on the world stage," says drummer Ric Lee (no relation to Alvin, who died in 2013). "We managed six songs at Woodstock, but *I'm Going Home* endorsed us, because of the film." Almost immediately, TYA found themselves on a succession of high-profile US and European tours, lasting well into the 70s. "Before Woodstock we were playing to three-to-four thousand a night," recalls keyboardist Chick Churchill. "But afterwards we suddenly started playing to crowds of fifteen-to-twenty thousand."

I'm Going Home had arrived out of necessity. Touring Europe in the spring of 1968, TYA found themselves in need of a showstopper. "We were playing Scandinavia with the original Fleetwood Mac: Peter Green, Jeremy Spencer, Mick Fleetwood and John McVie," explains Lee. "It was a double-header tour but we were going on after them. And every night they were blowing us off stage, because they were doing *Shake Your Moneymaker*. It was hard work for us, because they'd gone down such a storm.

"Alvin didn't exactly get miffed," continues Lee, "but he said: 'Oh Christ, we've got to do something. We can't have this.' So one day he organised an afternoon rehearsal, which was totally unheard of. He played me this riff and I started to do a shuffle behind it. We did it again at the next soundcheck, then we put it in the set. It wasn't quite *Shake Your Moneymaker*, but we honed it and eventually it took off."

Less than a fortnight later, on May 14, *I'm Going Home* was recorded at Klooks Kleek, the Railway Hotel in West Hampstead's tiny venue, for the live album *Undead*. Just shy of six-and-a-half minutes, this rendition would be dwarfed by its Woodstock variant, yet the song still packs the same raw heat. Ric Lee and bassist Leo Lyons cook up a frenzied backing, Chick Churchill bubbles out an organ run and Alvin Lee roars away on guitar, heroically switching between lead and rhythm. At one point, things slow to a crawling whisper, before suddenly rushing outwards into an explosive climax.

Released in August '68, *Undead* (their second album) exudes a sticky urgency that was a direct result of where it was made. "Klooks Kleek was the upstairs room of a pub," says Lee. "There were two rooms – the one we played in, then a bar to the right – and it was absolutely jam-packed. Legally, it held about a hundred and twenty people, but there must've been over two hundred there that night. It was bloody hot. The Decca studio was right next door. Roy Thomas Baker [pre-Queen] was the engineer and he ran the wires over the roof from a desk to the studio. Roy was a real innovator, he thought outside the box."

> **"There must've been over two hundred people in the venue. Roy ran wires over the roof to the Decca studio. It was bloody hot."**

The circumstances of *Undead*'s release carried logic. TYA were already busy recording a new studio LP, but an invitation from US promoter Bill Graham, who wanted them to play his newly-opened venue in San Francisco, the Fillmore West, sent the band's label into overdrive. "The album we were working on, which turned out to be *Stonedhenge*, wasn't anywhere near finished when Bill asked us to go out there," Lee explains. "And the first one [1967's *Ten Years After*] hadn't really met with any interest, apart from specialist people. So we did *Undead* in a hurry, so that we'd have it out as we were touring the States." The chosen lead-off single in America was, naturally, *I'm Going Home*.

The band played a number of festivals over the next 12 months, most notably Newport Jazz and Seattle Pop. But Woodstock, in August, was the watershed. "We played in St. Louis the night before with Nina Simone, which was a strange kind of bill," Churchill remembers. "Then we flew to New York and were driven upstate to a hotel near to the festival site, where all the bands congregated. We had no idea there were that many people there until we flew over the crowd in a helicopter."

"It was an unbelievable sight," says Lee. "Crosby, Stills and Young – I believe Nash went in another way – shoved us aside and grabbed the helicopter before us, so we caught the next one. We flew in – me, my first wife and a medic, who warned us of this potential hepatitis outbreak: 'Don't eat anything unless it's cooked and don't drink anything unless it's sealed.' And then a storm caused the power to go out."

"There were some very strong winds that almost blew the stage down," Churchill remembers, "so it was just getting dark when we were finally able to get on.

"I don't think Alvin enjoyed all the attention afterwards. As soon as he walked out on the street he was recognisable. But Woodstock is probably the reason why we're still working. Without it we'd probably have gone into the tides of history. A wave would've broken on the shore and nobody would remember us. I'm glad it worked out." ●

THE RELUCTANT SUPERSTAR

Frequently cited as 'the Fastest Guitarist in the West', Alvin Lee always downplayed his own talents in public. "I never really tried to play fast," he told *Guitar World* in early 2013, just weeks before his death. "It kind of developed from the adrenalin rush of the hundreds of gigs I did long before Woodstock. They called me Captain Speedfingers and such, but I didn't take it seriously. There were many guitarists faster than me - Django Reinhardt, Barney Kessel, John McLaughlin and Joe Pass, to name a few. The solo in the [Woodstock] movie sounds pretty rough to me these days, but it had the energy, and that was what Ten Years After were all about."

GETTY

BACK ISSUES: STOREMAGS.COM

L-r: Ric Lee , Alvin Lee, Leon Lyons and Chick Churchill in 1968.

THE FACTS

RELEASE DATE
August 1968, on *Undead*

PERSONNEL
Alvin Lee
Lead vocals, guitar
Chick Churchill
Organ
Leo Lyons
Bass
Ric Lee
Drums

WRITTEN BY
Alvin Lee

PRODUCED BY
Mike Vernon

LABEL
Deram

Q&A

Joe Satriani

The lord of the strings on robotic cats, premature baldness, and the fruitless pursuit of Jimmy Page and Eddie Van Halen.

Words: **Henry Yates**

When Joe Satriani was announced as winner of the Maestro award at the 2015 Classic Rock Roll Of Honour, there wasn't a sniff of dissent in the room. After all, it's hard to imagine a musician who better fits the bloody-minded, bloodier-fingered, clinically obsessed profile of the guitar virtuoso – or one who deploys that technique to create such atmospheric music.

Since 1987's breakthrough *Surfing With The Alien*, Satch has been the instrumental shredder it's okay to like, a songwriter who uses his axe like a larynx to create mood-driven gold (not masturbatory dross). That tunes-before-chops philosophy continues with latest album *What Happens Next*, on which the guitarist is joined by the all-star band of Glenn Hughes (bass) and Chad Smith (drums).

Are you pleased with *What Happens Next*?
Oh yeah. Every step of making it was so much fun. Just the thought of having Glenn and Chad on the record, my head sorta exploded. Then, when they said 'yes'… there was so much excitement in that room at Sunset Sound, just big enough for three guys. Chad's passion is catching and it makes you play better. And Glenn is a superstar.

What was the inspiration behind *Catbot*?
I had this image in my head. We have a lot of robots in our lives now. They're controlling what's happening on the Internet, vacuuming our houses when we're away, making cars. In Japan, they're getting semi-human and animal-like robots. So I was thinking, 'What if you had a cat robot?' I was imagining it walking down the street at night, and of course, once it starts to communicate, it comes out sounding very robotic, not like a sweet little 'miaow'. It took me a while to work out how to get the guitar to sound like a tortured robot cat.

Do you ever wake up and think: "I'm arguably the best guitarist in the world"?
Never. I'm always worried that I won't be able to play. So for the first couple of moments I'll flex my fingers and go: "Okay, how do they feel today?" I have a harder time playing guitar than some of my best friends. If I'm hanging around with Steve Vai or John Petrucci, they don't have the tightness issues that I seem to always be plagued with. That might just be my physiology, that I'm so tightly wound.

Do you have amazing manual dexterity – typing, for example?
I'm getting better at typing – I use all my fingers. But thank God for spell-check.

Are you concerned about how ageing will affect your technique?
I'm much better now at harnessing my physical attributes. But on the other side, there's gonna be stuff that breaks down. I kinda noticed that in my late-twenties, just as my career started. I remember thinking it really would have helped if I was famous at nineteen, when my body was firing on all cylinders. Instead success came when I was turning thirty. And I thought: "Great, now I'm becoming old. My hair is falling out. This is bad timing." But those things are silly. If people connect with your music, they get used to how strange you look or the way you need to operate to make music.

Is there a lot of intergalactic space-talk when you get together with Brian May?
Y'know, when I talk about space I talk about science-fiction. When Brian talks about space he talks about space in reality, because he's a scientist. I can't keep up with him. So we talk more about music.

What are the benefits of permanently wearing sunglasses?
Well, you don't get your eyes burnt out by the spotlights. Or if you've gotta do that TV appearance after a long tour you can hide your fatigue. The sunglasses thing happened as a joke. I surprised my band one tour by showing up with my head shaved. And they were so horrified that they said I had to wear a hat and glasses or they wouldn't stop laughing on stage. Then I realised that having that curtain to hide behind allowed me to be more creative and feel less self-conscious. My buddy Sammy Hagar feels the same way. He says he can't go on stage without sunglasses because he's so embarrassed to be a singer. He's the last person you'd expect to think that way.

You've said you're not cut out for showbiz. What's your least-favourite part of the job?
Being around people. It's a major drawback, right? Like, if my manager called me and said: "You'll be meeting fifty people every day before the show," immediately I'd start getting butterflies in my stomach. It's silly. I mean, I'm a grown-up and I've been doing this my whole life, and still my initial reaction is: "Don't do it."

Your long-standing G3 tour brings together three different guitar heroes – but Eddie Van Halen and Jeff Beck turned down your invite. Were you offended?
Hah – I was expecting it. But that's okay, because for some artists, it's good for them to only be seen in their own environment. But I'll still keep asking Eddie until he says: "Please don't ask me again." I'm holding out hope, because I believe his audience would love to see him step out, relax and show how good he is. Jeff, of course, is a super-icon. Wouldn't it be great to have Jimmy Page and Billy Gibbons do a G3? I wouldn't have to play. I'd just sit in the audience and watch.

What's your favourite memory of that Roll Of Honour in 2015?
It was just a nice thing to take a few hours out from the insanity of the world and pat each other on the back. I remember Marco [Minnemann], our drummer, came to our table beaming like a kid and said: "I just talked to Jimmy Page and he'd love to meet you." So I was like: "Oh my God, I'm gonna finally meet Jimmy Page." So we're like five feet away – I'm literally just about to say: "Hello Mr Page, my name is Joe Satriani" – when some big guy steps in front of us and says: "You can't be here. Go back to your table." We were two little kids, y'know, being told to go back to our classroom. I got so close!

What Happens Next is out on January 12 via Legacy Recordings/Sony Music. The G3 UK Tour begins on April 24.

"What if Jimmy Page and Billy Gibbons did a G3? I'd sit and watch."

JOSEPH CULTICE/PRESS

Back issues: Storemags.com

6 THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT...

Black Moth

A band who actually live the North-South divide, their heaviness “comes from female experience”.

Words: **Polly Glass** Photo: **James Sharrock**

Black Moth singer Harriet Bevan, who we meet over coffee a few days before our band photo shoot at Gordon’s Wine Bar in London, is juggling band life with psychotherapy training. This will add to the literature degree and fine art Masters she already has. “I’ve learnt, with my interest in literature and art, that it really comes down to an interest in people,” she reasons, during a chat that veers from the *Pygmalion* myth to the merits of L7.

This human focus has fed into Black Moth’s third album, *Anatomical Venus*, a heavy yet hooky cocktail of Black Sabbath-infused atmosphere, woozy grunge and proto-punk undertones. Since forming in 2010, the band have swirled touches of gothic horror into their songs and style. Now, as Bevan explains, with *Anatomical Venus* they’ve made something more in-depth.

Anatomical Venus was inspired by 18th-century waxworks.

Sharing its name with a book about wax models of women, used to instruct male surgeons, it meditates on aspects of the female experience.

“These models were way more erotic than they needed to be, really quite fetishistic, made by men for other men to pick apart the workings of women. Some have their feet tied, some have pearl necklaces on…”

Bevan started out in music with 60s pop…

Growing up in Buckinghamshire and then in Essex, Bevan initially fell for Diana Ross & The Supremes through her parents’ record collection. This led to, among others, The Kinks and the Mamas And The Papas: “I was an eleven-year-old buying sixties compilation tapes! Something about that era drew me in.” By the age of 13, however, she was “a full-on goth”, wearing floor-length cobweb dresses to the local under-18s discos.

…before discovering grunge.

The influence of bands such as Alice In Chains and L7 – sounds that Bevan discovered as a teen – can be heard in the moody fuzz of Black Moth’s music.

“But L7 only seemed to be mentioned in ‘most shocking moments in rock’ pieces,” she muses. “Later I became furious about that, because I’d thought they were just some dumb band who threw tampons out, but actually they were one of my favourite bands of the grunge era.”

Around this time she met guitarist Jim Swainston in high school, and they started a band,

Black Moth: (l-r) Federica Gialanze, Dave Vachon, Jim Swainston, Dom McCready, Harriett Bevan.

playing Tool and Nirvana covers. "From that point, it was what we were going to do. We were pretty terrible for a few years but we kept on going."

They started 'properly' in Leeds.
Aged 16, Bevan moved to Leeds with Swainston (then her boyfriend – today they're just friends and bandmates). While studying at university, their first 'real' band, The Bacchae, played 60s garage punk-inspired rock. As their tastes became heavier – "we got into the groovy end of sixties psych-y stuff" – Black Moth was born, although they've retained Stooges-esque traces of their Bacchae days.

"You get the purist metalheads going: 'This isn't metal enough,' she says, laughing, "or the purist indie kids going: 'This is too metal!' But you've gotta do what you do."

Black Moth have a strong connection with the North.
Having already immersed themselves in the local music scene, getting enough people to fill their first gigs wasn't difficult. While Bevan and guitarist Federica Gialanze now live in the capital, the three boys have remained up north.

"There was a real buzz, everyone was excited by what each other was doing," Bevan recalls of the band's early Leeds days. "There was a healthy amount of subcultures and weirdos. Jimmy and I ran a club night, and we had one where people dressed as paraphilias, one with a disease theme…"

Black Moth are heavy *because* of the women in the band.
Fronting a heavy band, Bevan has dealt with her share of 'Ooh, but you're a woman!'-type reactions. "If anything, I used to play down my female cisgender identity because I didn't want to be tied down by everything it implied," she admits.

Accordingly, she played shows in huge T-shirts and avoided wearing dresses. But with *Anatomical Venus*, and its focus on the female experience, things have changed.

"Black Moth have made a record that is heavy *because* of the women in the band," she stresses, "not in spite of them. The heaviness in our music comes from female experience – and there's a *lot* of heavy shit in that!"

Anatomical Venus is out on February 23 via Candlelight Records. Black Moth tour the UK from February 7 to 16.

SPECIAL THANKS TO GORDON'S WINE BAR, LONDON FOR THE PHOTO SHOOT LOCATION gordonswinebar.com

MALCOLM YOUNG

January 6, 1953 – November 18, 2017

Straight-talking, down-to-earth, no-nonsense, determined, hugely talented, he was the engine that powered and steered AC/DC to successes beyond their wildest dreams.

Words: **Dave Ling** Portrait: **Michael Halsband**

Just like the music made by his band, Malcolm Young spent his 64 years on this planet defiantly opposing all forms of overstatement and grandiosity. Young may have been one of the biggest rock stars that the world has ever seen, but he was proud of being ordinary. He also believed in speaking the truth, no matter who it offended.

Malcolm's brother Angus, talking to *Classic Rock* in 2003 several months after AC/DC's induction to the Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame, voiced indignation that the HOF had tried – and failed – to "make us wear fucking tuxedos" to the ceremony, adding a curt: "Fuck that!"

Mal, the elder of the two siblings, then took up the story, explaining his band's annoyance as they were kept waiting around in the wings while U2 guitarist The Edge inducted the Clash."Fuck, he made this forty-minute speech [about late guitarist Joe Strummer]. We had sympathy [for the Clash], but The Edge was the most boring bloke I've ever had the misfortune to witness," he seethed.

AC/DC got "madder and madder", until finally their moment arrived. "When they said to go, we fuckin' took off," Malcolm said with a grin. "It was an anger-fuelled performance. We ripped the place apart; they were dancing up in the balconies in their tuxes. It was quite a moment for us. The rest of the bands were pretty mild by comparison."

With its overtones of rebelling at authority, the earning of new-found respect and blowing the doors off in response to a pressure cooker-like scenario, the Hall Of Fame incident could be viewed as a microcosm of the career of this remarkable band. For 45 years AC/DC have personified the words 'stubborn', 'independent' and 'secretive', doing things their way or not doing them at all. With the band having been shortlisted and ignored more than once before by the Hall Of Fame, Malcolm later shrugged: "To us [being inducted] is not really an honour. We just had to go through with it, in a way."

Although several of the group's members past and present, including lead guitarist Angus and singers Bon Scott and Brian Johnson, are more famous in a visual sense, behind the scenes rhythm guitarist Malcolm was very much the glue that held everything together for AC/DC, co-writing the songs and performing them on stage in a blur of vigour and ease. Malcolm was very much the band's leader, cracking the whip and ensuring that the AC/DC machine functioned exactly as it needed to.

The world of rock music mourned when Malcolm, who had suffered from dementia for the past three years, died peacefully surrounded by his family on November 18, 2017.

A statement issued on behalf of AC/DC reminded us of his many qualities: "From the outset, Malcolm knew what he wanted to achieve and, along with his younger brother [Angus], took to the world stage giving their all at every show. Nothing less would do for their fans." It continued: "Malcolm always stuck to his guns and did and said exactly what he wanted," it continued. "He took in great pride in all that he endeavoured. His loyalty to the fans was unsurpassed. He leaves behind an enormous legacy that will live on forever."

> **"Malcolm always stuck to his guns and did and said exactly what he wanted."**
>
> **AC/DC statement**

Malcolm's passing came just three weeks after the sudden loss of George, the eldest of the Young brothers and the producer who helped to shape many of AC/DC's best-loved albums, including *High Voltage*, *TNT*, *Let There Be Rock* and *Powerage*.

It has always been stressed that Malcolm had given AC/DC his blessing for the band to continue in his absence. In fact they had proved on more than one occasion that it was possible to tour without him, first in 1988 when nephew Stevie deputised as Malcolm dealt with alcohol issues, then in a more permanent manner in 2014, and also that the band could record while deprived

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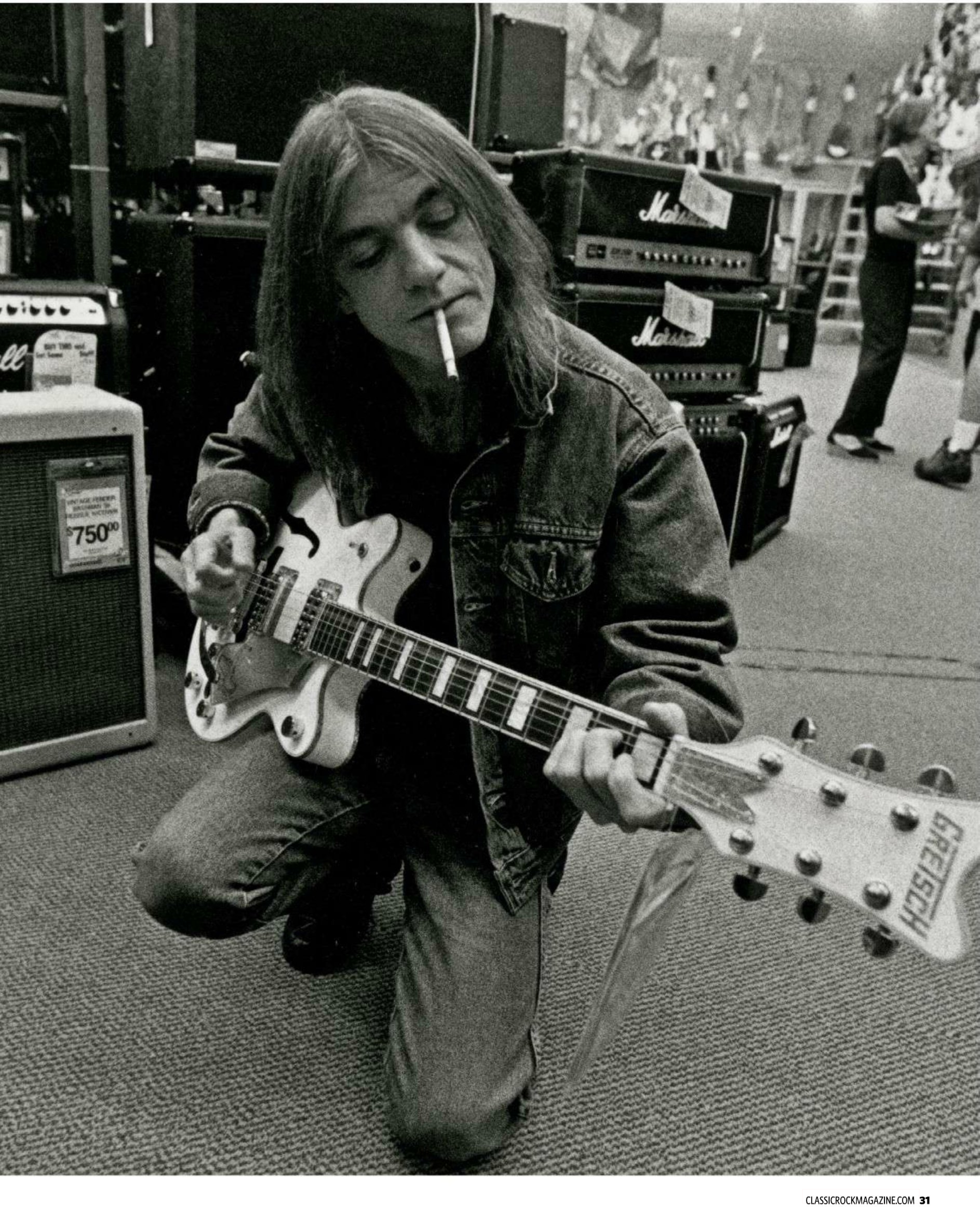
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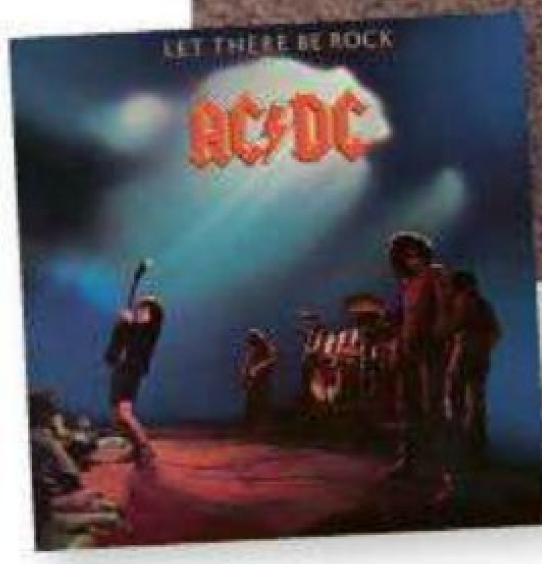
“We'll do it my way, or no way...” Malcolm and the Bon Scott years AC/DC.



of his creative input. The problem the group now face is whether or not it would be right to do so.

Notwithstanding the hearing problems that forced Brian Johnson to sit out much of AC/DC's most recent tour, on which Guns N' Roses' Axl Rose stood in, could AC/DC have now reached the end of the road? That's a question for another day, but the odds must surely be weighted in favour of a dignified final resolution?

Malcolm Mitchell Young was born on a council estate in the Cranhill district of Glasgow. Of distinctly blue-collar stock, his father worked in a rope works, at a builders' yard and then after the war as a postman, while his mother remained at home to nurture a clan that included eight children.

Along with another 13 members of the Young family, Malcolm and Angus emigrated to Australia in the summer of 1963. If the brothers were not already close enough, being the two kids with 'funny accents' in a foreign land served to bond them even more.

As every rock fan knows, a decade later AC/DC were formed and shaped within Sydney's super-tough bar circuit – an environment that could strike fear into the toughest of alpha males, let alone a band with a name that could be seen as implying bisexuality. In fact the name supposedly came after Angus and Malcolm's sister Margaret had seen the letters on a sewing machine.

> **“We don't make music for the critics, we go for the reaction from the kids.”**
>
> **Malcolm Young**

George was the first of the brothers to find stardom, having formed The Easybeats with Harry Vanda and in 1966 had an international hit with *Friday On My Mind*.

“Me and Angus were playing guitar already, even before we left Glasgow,” Malcolm recalled decades later. “By [George] doing well [with The Easybeats], you sort of quietly dreamed that you could do it too, one day.”

Although AC/DC's style has often been categorised as hard rock or even heavy metal, Malcolm later stressed: “From the get-go I said it was a rock'n'roll band. That's how it evolved. I was still playing guitar like a piano to get a vibe of a Little Richard song, so it was things like that, playing rhythm around where the rhythm came from on the record, but with two guitars.”

The decision to promote Bon Scott from band 'chauffeur' to lead singer in 1974 was to prove pivotal. Not unreasonably, Angus thought Malcolm and Margaret were taking the piss when, that same year, they first suggested that Angus should dress up as a schoolboy on stage. But this unlikely gamble actually achieved its intended goal by defusing the violence.

As Vanda & Young, Harry Vanda and George Young took on the role of the band's producers. AC/DC's first two Australia-released albums (later pared down for the international market as *High Voltage*) showed greatness in fits and starts.

Relocating to London in 1976, where they had signed an international deal, the band once again built their reputation from scratch, going from playing venues such as the Red Cow pub in Hammersmith, West London, where they debuted, to setting new attendance records at the Marquee club in Wardour Street.

The albums *Let There Be Rock* and *Powerage*, issued in 1977 and '78 respectively, stand as irresistible watermarks of this period. But the band's big breakthrough came after linking up with producer Robert John 'Mutt' Lange for *Highway To Hell*. Malcolm later admitted that they had no idea of Lange's history, joking: “If we'd known that he had produced the Boomtown Rats we'd never have let him through the door.” All that they knew was their manager Michael Browning's verdict that the South African was “a genius”. And so it proved.

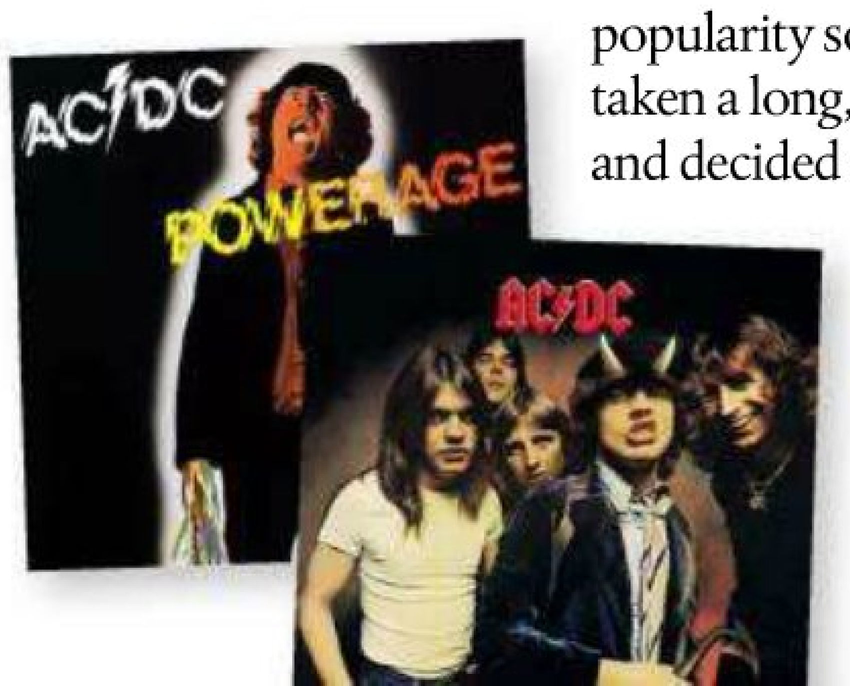
After Bon Scott's tragic sudden death in February 1980, AC/DC considered calling it a day. But instead they picked up the pieces – with what might have seemed to some like indecent haste – and released their next album, recorded with his replacement, former Geordie singer Brian Johnson, five months later.

Back In Black, produced by Mutt Lange, made AC/DC bigger than ever before, its eventual 50 million sales (and counting) making it the second-biggest-selling album ever, behind Michael Jackson's *Thriller*.

Follow-up *For Those About To Rock We Salute You*, however, was patchy by comparison. Years later Malcolm exclaimed: “Christ, it took forever to make that record – and it sounds like it. It's full of bits and pieces and it doesn't flow properly. There's some good riffs, but only one song we like and that's the title track.” Despite its shortcomings, it still topped the US chart.

Although it would take a while, the band's fortunes began to dip. The lacklustre *Flick Of The Switch* ('83) just managed platinum status, while next album, *Fly On The Wall* ('85), fared even worse.

While in the face of dwindling returns and popularity some groups might have taken a long, hard look at themselves and decided a change or two was needed, AC/DC continued to plough the same familiar hi-decibel, double



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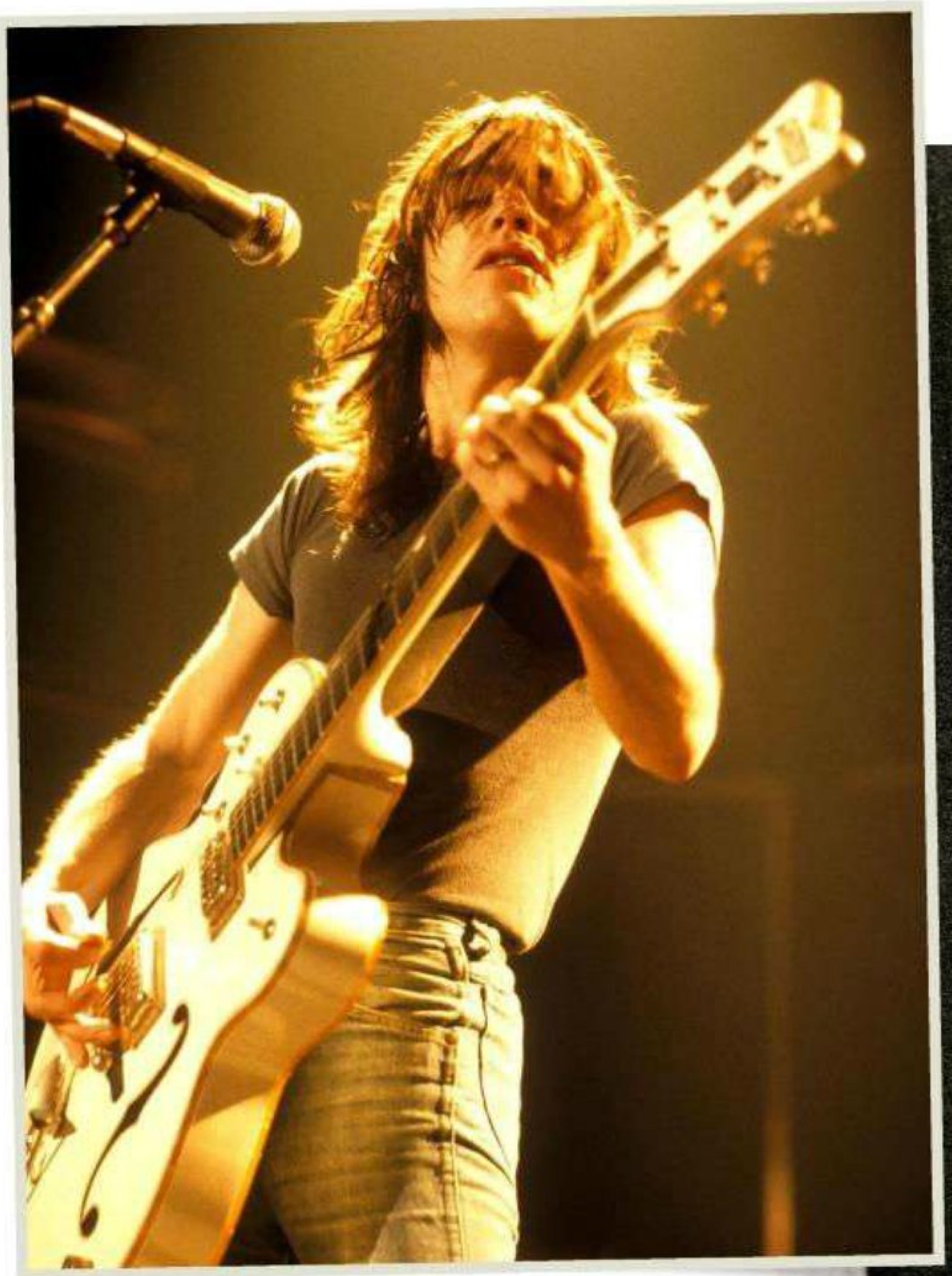
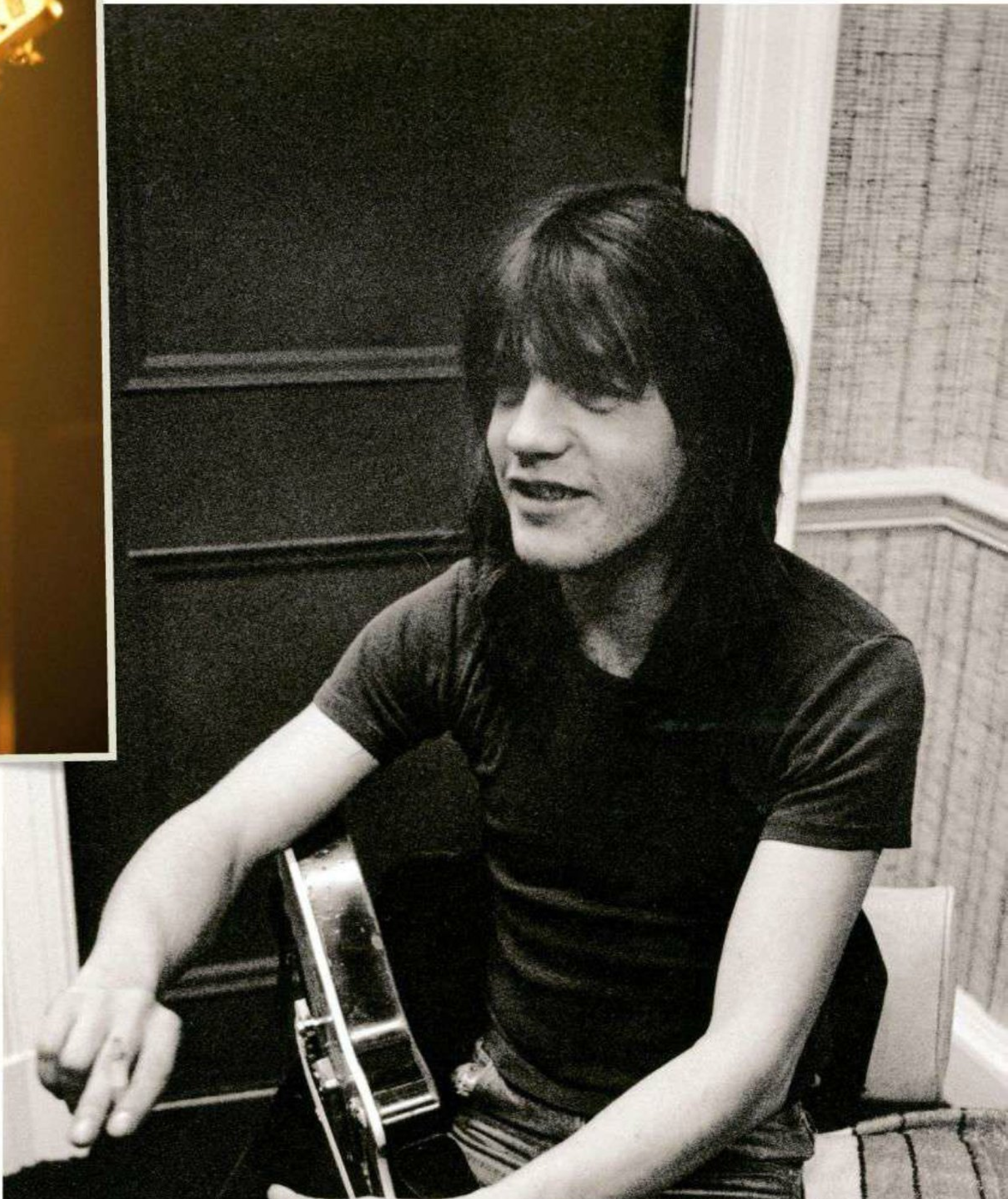




Rhythm king: Malcolm Young backstage and (top) on stage with AC/DC at the Orpheum Theater in Boston, MA, October 9, 1980.

entendre-enhanced furrow they had always done and on which they had built their reputation and greatest successes.

When their headline appearance at Castle Donington's Monsters Of Rock Festival in 1984 was dismissed as "stale", Malcolm, talking to one interviewer from *Kerrang!*, bristled: "There's no reason to change our act – and it's not really an act, that's the way Angus is. He likes to run around and take it out on his guitar. Look," he added, "we don't make music for the critics, we go for the reaction from the kids. If they stopped reacting, then we'd know something was wrong. But at Donington everybody in the place was rocking. If anybody criticised that, then they weren't at the show."

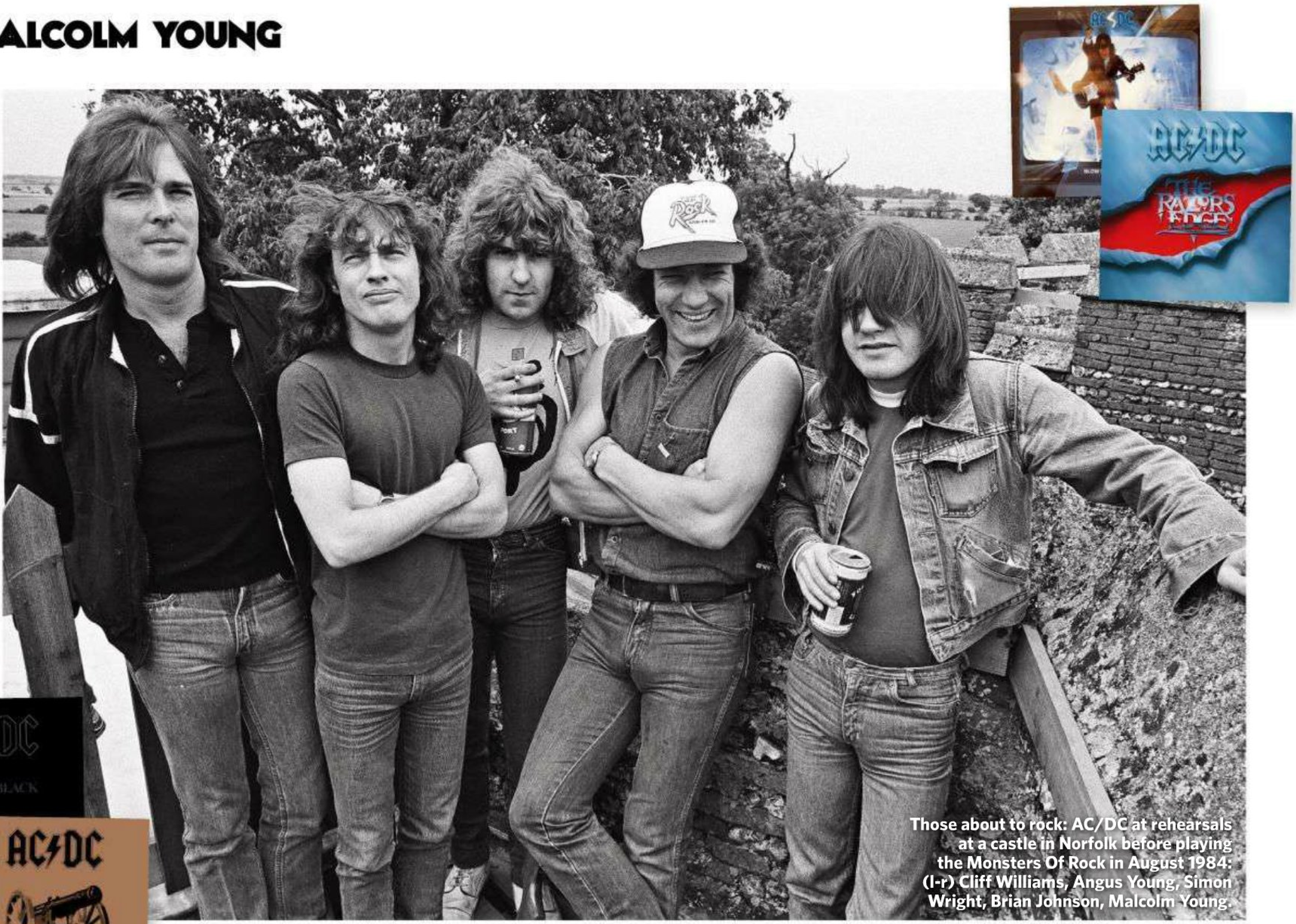
Sure enough, things came around again. The patronage of new stars such as Guns N' Roses and Metallica didn't hurt them at all.

Along the way, Malcolm stepped off the band's touring schedule to get sober. "The funny thing was I was never drunk heaps, I just drank consistently and it caught up with me," he admitted in 2004. "Angus was going: 'I'm your brother; I don't want to see you dead here. Remember Bon?' So I took that break and cleaned myself up."

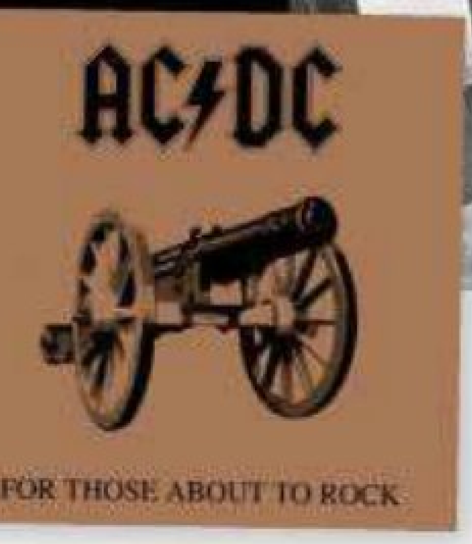
Having re-engaged Vanda & Young for 1988's *Blow Up Your Video*, two years later they were accused of selling out by bringing in producer Bruce Fairbairn, of Bon Jovi/Aerosmith fame, for *The Razors Edge*. The album made the US and UK Top 10 and sold an estimated 10 million copies.

By the 1990s, hair metal had been supplanted by the grunge revolution, and as an act founded upon pure rock'n'roll AC/DC were cast as outsiders once again. In '92, an interviewer asked Malcolm which bands he'd listened to while growing up. The answer – "The Stones and The Who" – was about as unsurprising as his response to then being asked who he currently listened to: "The Stones and The Who… and that's about it."

MAIN: ROSS HALFIN; INSET: GETTY



Those about to rock: AC/DC at rehearsals at a castle in Norfolk before playing the Monsters Of Rock in August 1984: (l-r) Cliff Williams, Angus Young, Simon Wright, Brian Johnson, Malcolm Young.



AC/DC's reputation as a premier-league live attraction remained undiminished, however. That decade they released just one more studio album, the Rick Rubin-produced *Ballbreaker.* "We would never go back to him," Malcolm told *Guitar World* of Grammy winner Rubin, who would develop a reputation for reviving the careers of artists on the wane. "We thought he was a phony."

Sure enough, later on AC/DC returned to brother George (without Harry Vanda) for their first record of the current millennium. 2000's *Stiff Upper Lip* attained Top 10 status effortlessly in America, but by now the band's golden era was already behind them.

No matter what yardstick you use, AC/DC's achievements were huge. Over a career that brought them an estimated 200 million record sales, Angus and Malcolm stuck to the adage 'if it ain't broke don't fix it' and together they cannily – some might say ruthlessly – planned a route to the very top. Few bands would have had the balls to fire Peter Mensch, their manager, five days after they had played at the Monsters Of Rock Festival in 1981, although according to tour manager Ian Jeffrey – himself later frozen out ("It was like I never existed") – that's exactly what the Youngs did. More surprising still was the decision to say goodbye to 'Mutt' Lange, the mastermind behind their game-changing breakthrough *Back In Black.* Angus later complained: "He'd take forever to get things done. Otherwise it'd have been in and out in a week, I'd say."

The man behind so many of these important decisions was Malcolm Young. "The band belonged to Malcolm," Ian Jeffrey once claimed. "It was Malcolm who told [drummer] Phil Rudd to stick to the beat; Malcolm who told [bassist] Cliff [Williams] where to stand, when to come to the mic. When Brian [Johnson] joined, it was Malcolm who told him to shut the fuck up between songs and just stand there and sing. It would always be Malcolm, every direction or turning they took."

"The band belonged to Malcolm... every direction or turning they took."

Former tour manager Ian Jeffrey

If decisions needed to be merciless, then they were. And it's difficult to view Brian Johnson's removal from the group in 2016 as anything but that, although it had nothing to do with Malcolm, who was already sick. But over the long term, such ruthlessness was certainly part of the fuel that fired AC/DC to world domination.

The final album AC/DC made with Malcolm Young, *Black Ice*, topped the charts in 29 countries. Out on the road and with his memory beginning to fade, before each show Malcolm had to sit down and brush up on the small details of the performance.

"It was hard work for him," Angus told *The Guardian*'s Michael Hann. "He was relearning a lot of those songs that he knew backwards; the ones we were playing that night he'd be relearning. He had that thing where you've just got to keep going."

Naturally there were both highs and lows.

"You'd have a really great day and he'd be Malcolm again, and other times his mind was going," Angus revealed. "But he still held it together. He'd still get on the stage. Some nights he played and you'd think: 'Does he know where he is?' But he got through."

The brothers had had the difficult conversation about Mal's failing health even before work on *Black Ice* began. Angus revealed: "I had said to him: 'Are you sure you want to do this? I have to know that you really want to do it.' He was the one who said: 'Yes! We've really got to do it.'"

The inevitable point was reached at which Malcolm could no longer be a part of AC/DC. Since 2014 he had been receiving around-the-clock care while living in a nursing home. Understandably and rightly, the band were furious when the *Sydney Morning Herald* revealed the full extent of his condition. "That was bottom-feeding, that was," Brian Johnson says.

For Angus, without his elder brother on board and by his side it was, of course, distinctly troubling to continue touring the world and pretend it was business as usual. But he knuckled down. And even when Johnson was unable to tour *Rock Or Bust* the show went on. It was a mark of AC/DC's stature that Axl Rose agreed to help ➢

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Malcolm and Angus with Stones hero Keith Richards.

them out by standing in for Johnson; as was Rose's unexpected raised levels of professionalism when he shoehorned himself into their highly regimented world without displaying the tardiness for which he has been strongly criticised.

With Rose in tow the *Rock Or Bust* tour generated a whopping $67.5 million (£50m) in 2016, placing AC/DC at the top that year's list of the biggest earners in rock, ahead of the Stones, Springsteen, McCartney and U2. While the importance of fulfilling their planned obligations cannot be overstated, for Angus and others involved with AC/DC, many years had passed since money could be considered a driving force.

A veritable *Who's Who* of Australian rock music gathered for Malcom's funeral at St Mary's Cathedral in Sydney, among them bandmates past and present including Brian Johnson, Phil Rudd, Cliff Williams and Mark Evans, and Angry Anderson, Jimmy Barnes and Harry Vanda. At the ceremony, Angus defiantly wore a pair of jeans and clutched his brother's beloved Gretsch Jet Firebird guitar, nicknamed The Beast, in its case. During the service, he reportedly rested the prized instrument on his brother's coffin.

Members of the Young family and AC/DC alumni did not take to the lectern. And although Malcolm had made a living via the bawdiest and ballsiest of rock songs, he was sent on his final journey by a cathedral choir that sang the hymns *Amazing Grace* and *The Lord is My Shepherd*. After the service, as the cortege drew away to a private family burial, the Scots College Pipes & Drums Band played a medley of songs including *Waltzing Matilda* and the guitar solo from *It's A Long Way To The Top*. It was a dignified end to an extraordinary life.

I had been thrilled to interview Malcolm and Angus together for *Classic Rock* in Berlin in 2003. They were exactly like you imagined: foul-mouthed and blokey as fuck, tiny in stature (each stood less than five foot five) but huge in presence. Angus chain-smoked with unbelievable regularity, lighting another ciggie even before he'd finished the one he was already puffing on. Malcolm was blunt, friendly and unflinchingly honest.

Angus at Malcolm's funeral service with his brother's beloved Gretsch Jet Firebird guitar.

AC/DC were in Germany to play three shows with their heroes the Rolling Stones, with whom they'd jammed in Australia the previous year. "I think we could be making music when we're as old as them," Malcolm told me. "From the beginning, this band always went for the throat. It was an energy thing, and it still is."

Sheer unadulterated volume has always played a part too. After Angus quipped: "That's to keep you awake," Malcolm sat upright in the chair and declared: "We're not going to fall into that trap of old age. We can't get up there and play *Highway To Hell*, *For Those About To Rock* and *The Jack* quietly." That last word was expressed with disdain. "You gotta stay young."

When I asked whether they sometimes thought Bon Scott might be looking down – or up! – on AC/DC's success since he passed away, Mal grinned: "To be honest, if there is an afterlife he'll probably be saying: 'C'mon, guys. Play that one fucking faster, put some fucking grunt into it.' That's what he was like.

"When he joined us, Bon took the band by the scruff of the neck," he continued. "On stage it'd be: 'Don't just stand there, you c**t.' So whatever AC/DC went on to achieve, Bon was also very responsible for."

The last words, inevitably, go to Angus: "The bond that we had was unique and very special. My brother leaves behind an enormous legacy that will live on for ever. Malcolm, job well done."

Just like his friend Bon Scott, Malcolm Young put 'grunt' into everything that he did. Like the singer he, too, will be sorely missed.

Angus and Malcolm, the electrifying power driving AC/DC, in the late 80s.

"My brother leaves behind an enormous legacy that will live on for ever."

Angus Young

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"People say Malcolm's rhythm parts are simple. They're missing the point"

THE RHYTHM KING

By Dave Mustaine, Megadeth

I was probably eighteen years old, living on my own. My mom had moved out. She was a Jehovah's Witness and didn't want anything to do with me because I liked to smoke pot. And the best way to get pot was to sell it to other people and get it for free, so I was trading it with this girl who worked in a music store.

That's how I got AC/DC's *Let There Be Rock*. I came home, put the record on my turntable – and when the needle hit the vinyl my life changed forever. Up until then, guitar-wise I'd been learning the classic stuff like Zeppelin, Kiss, Ted Nugent; not really so much that boogie-woogie riffage kind of stuff.

Malcolm was one of the greatest rhythm guitar players ever – and if you don't have good rhythm under the solo, it sounds like crap. Y'know, The Beatles were famous for back beats and for turning the beat around, and that's one of the things that AC/DC and Malcolm did a lot. Overdose the way that the riff goes against the beat. Y'know, that anticipated riff where it almost seems like it would be ahead of the drum beat. I just loved it.

Some people say Malcolm's rhythm parts are simple. They're missing the point. Think of somebody who has every single shade and tint and hue under the sun, versus the guy that's got one piece of paper and one pencil – and they both accomplish the same thing. My hat would be tipped to the person who can do the most with the least. There's only two other guitar players that I would give that kind of credibility to, and that'd be Rudolf Schenker [Scorpions] and Brian Tatler from Diamond Head. I definitely prefer to handle the heavier rhythm stuff now, because of what Malcolm did with AC/DC. I would say it's certainly one of those predecessors to speed metal and thrash metal.

One of my favourite pictures ever is me and Malcolm in Germany. We were at an F1 race track where we were playing that night. I'd just come in to say hi to everybody for the night. We took a picture and the two of us were standing next to each other – and he's so little, I had to bend over so I'm the same height with his head. We made little fists and stuff and it was like, "Awesome – this is my guy!"

First off, when Malcolm got the diagnosis I was in shock. Nothing can happen to Malcolm. He's impervious to any kind of disease. He's Malcolm Young, dammit. When the news happened that he'd passed, I was just dicking around on my computer, writing to our fans on Twitter. Somebody said: "Dave, I'm sorry about Malcolm." I said: "What are you talking about?" Because how many people do you know called Malcolm? Not a lot, right? So I started to go into meltdown mode. Malcolm was my hero. If there's any sort of bittersweet consolation to all this, it's that he's back with Bon and his brother George.

MICK HUTSON

"Thank you for being an integral part of the soundtrack to my life. Your music is the definition of timeless and inspiring." *Lars Ulrich, Metallica*

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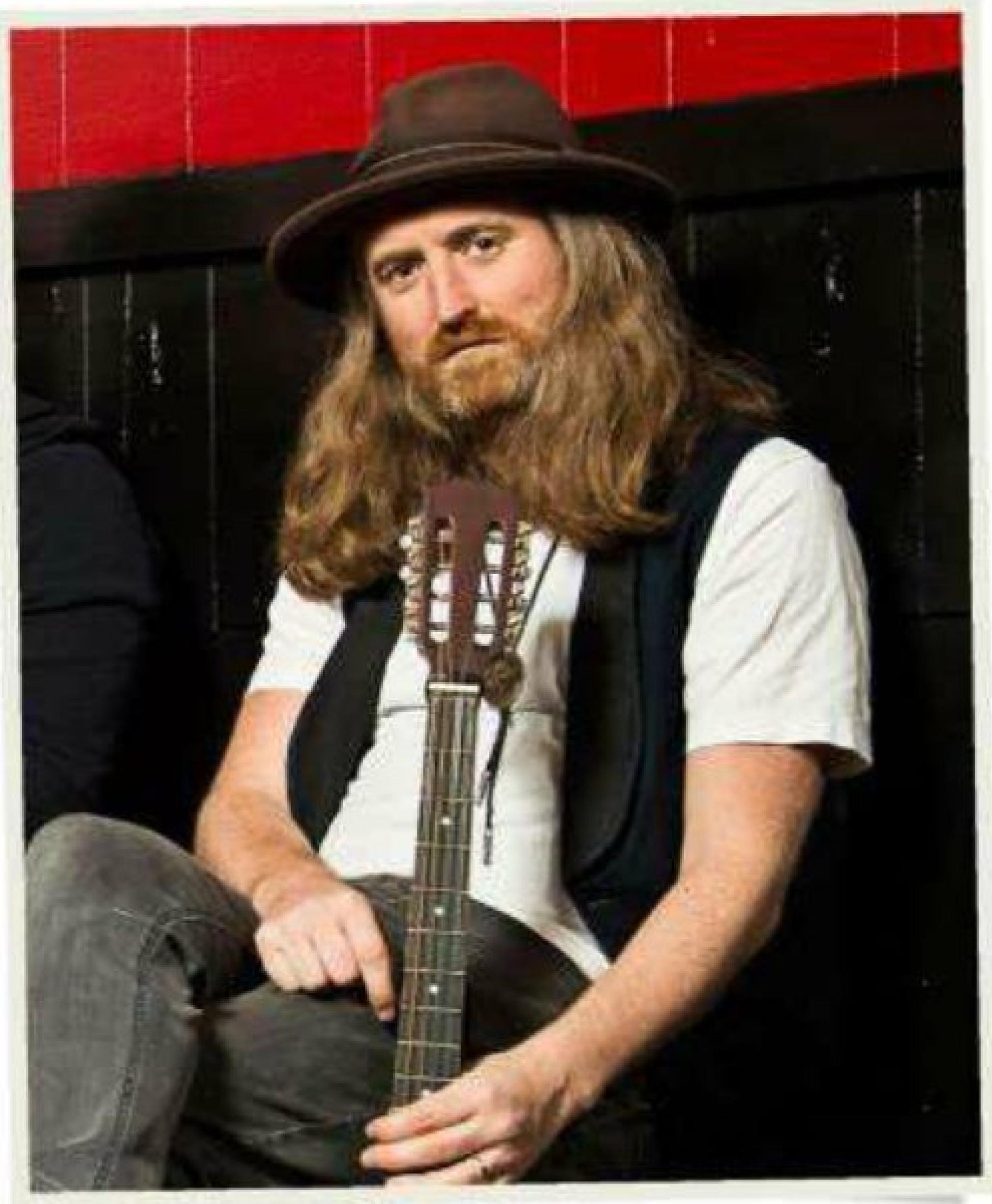
THE CHAMPION

By Cormac Neeson, The Answer



I think we did a hundred and eighteen shows with AC/DC on the *Black Ice* tour. The first time we ever met the Young brothers, we were invited into the dressing room to get acquainted. We knew it was coming all day, and I was trying to figure out what the hell I would say to these legends. So we walk in… and we spend twenty minutes talking to Malcolm about *Father Ted*. That was the first thing he said: "I bet you guys are sitting on your tour bus watching the *Father Ted* box set." It kinda threw us a little bit. But I mean, what else are you going to talk to Malcolm Young about? It might as well be an Irish comedy show.

It was Malcolm who gave us that break. We had one record out at that point, and he'd heard it and liked it. I think he liked the fact there was no bullshit with us, and with his Celtic roots it struck a chord with him. He insisted we were given a shot at that tour. And I know for a fact there were countless big-hitter labels and agents sitting down with the powers that be, trying to force their bands on to that tour. But Malcolm stood firm.

So a very principled man. And a very caring man. Malcolm actively made sure we were treated well on that tour. And every other night, we'd be playing our gig and you'd look over to the pit and he'd be standing there having a look, checking in to make sure we were still firing on all cylinders. You could tell he was keeping an eye on all things *Black Ice* over the course of that tour. And you never forgot that he was the big brother. Of course, it was a joy to be able to stand at the side of the stage and watch Malcolm nailing it every night. That right hand up close, it's even better.

Was there any indication of his illness? Not for me. All I saw was a guy on top of his game, nailing the AC/DC rhythm sound that defines the band for me. He was the backbone, y'know?

We were given the first run of American dates, about thirty shows, on a trial basis. But it kept rolling, to the point where a year and a half later we had to go to Malcolm and say: "Listen, we need to get off this tour to make another record."

A few years later, Micky [Waters, Answer bassist] was on holiday in Australia, and Malcolm went out of his way to meet him. I know he kept a watchful eye on our career, too, well after the *Black Ice* tour wound up. So his death hit me on a number of levels. As a fan it's a massive loss to rock'n'roll. But then we know he's leaving behind a beautiful family who loved him very much, and that's hardest to take.

THE BAND LEADER

By Dave Meniketti, Y&T

Y&T opened for AC/DC on the UK leg of the *For Those About To Rock* tour in September 1982. They allowed us to hang out in their dressing room maybe half a dozen times, mainly as they ate dinner after the show. Their dressing room was like an inner sanctuary. Cliff [Williams] was the guy we spent the most time with, and Brian Johnson was always around, though Malcolm kept himself to himself. Watching and observing him, he was the guy with the final say on everything. He was quite opinionated. Everybody in the band had their say, but if it didn't get past Malcolm it wouldn't pass muster.

As well as being the manager within the band, AC/DC was just as much about his guitar playing and songwriting. The bass and drums were very important, obviously, but his rhythm playing was the heart and soul of their sound. Malcolm had the time-keeping thing going on. His tone and the way that he strummed those chords, he was one by himself. He stood at the back and let the others get on with the show, only stepping forward to sing back-up vocals.

As a support act, AC/DC treated us very fairly. Believe me, that wasn't usual. Most headliners tend to limit the amount of PA system and lighting you can use. AC/DC just wanted us to play the best show we could.

Malcolm's death really saddened me. As a rock fan, AC/DC were an inspiration to me. And as a musician, that was among the greatest tours we were on. He's gone from the face of the planet but his tunes will live on. And it's quite possible that Angus could keep on going; the YouTube [video] I saw with Axl on vocals and Stevie [Young] in Malcolm's place was fantastic. If Angus wants to continue, why not?

INTERVIEWS BY PAUL ELLIOTT, DAVE LING AND HENRY YATES

DAVE MENIKETTI & CORMAC NEESON: WILL IRELAND

REMEMBERING MALCOLM

THE GUITARIST

Phil Collen, Def Leppard

The sound that Malcolm and Angus Young created together was incredible. It was a vast sound and completely unique. Of course, it helped that they were brothers – they had such an understanding. And although it's hard to be really creative when you're playing basic stuff as they did, Malcolm and Angus absolutely nailed it.

We've always said that the blueprint for Def Leppard was AC/DC-meets-Queen – the rock power and that almost funky rhythm that drove AC/DC, plus the depth and third dimension and the creativity of Queen. We still try to do that, and I've always nicked stuff off Malcolm Young. He was the perfect rhythm guitar player. Pete Townshend was hard to beat as a rhythm player, but in terms of hard rock you've got to give it to Malcolm.

Back In Black is one of the greatest records of all time. *Highway To Hell* and For *Those About To Rock* are both amazing too. Their music was a living, breathing entity.

THE PUBLISHER

James Cassidy

As head of A&R at Albert Productions from 1998 through 2009, I had the privilege to be mentored by Fifa Riccobono, George Young & Harry Vanda. It was an inspirational period for me professionally, and on several occasions I had the opportunity to meet with Malcolm and Angus.

He was the most kind, unassuming and humble man, who always made me feel at ease and welcome. He took a keen interest in my work at Alberts UK, including the signing of The Answer. But when it came to the support slot for the 2008 *Black Ice* tour, we had to make our case like every other band on the planet for what was considered the most coveted support slot in rock.

We shared a balmy summer evening dinner at an Italian restaurant in Dean Street, London where we discussed the possibility of The Answer doing the tour. I was aware of the competition from much bigger bands, but he simply said something to me that exemplified his persona: "It doesn't matter who wants the support, it's a case of who is right for it, and The Answer are that band." He knew what he wanted, and nothing or anyone would cause his conviction to waver. As I left that dinner, it was the most numbing and surreal feeling. I knew that if Malcolm said it was happening, then it was happening. That was his way. Thank you Malcolm, for all your support and kindness to me over the years, you will be missed.

"Malcolm was the reason I wanted to play rhythm guitar. I toured with him and he was genuinely lovely. The world has lost a true champion." *Ginger Wildheart*

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"He was the glue that held AC/DC together"

THE TIMEKEEPER

By Joe Elliott, Def Leppard

For a rhythm player, I can't think of anybody better than Malcolm Young. He was the glue that held AC/DC together. The way that Malcolm held it down, it allowed Angus to go off as – excuse the pun – the live wire that he is. In that early line-up you had Angus and Bon Scott going off like two people on elastic bands, flying away and then shooting back. And then you had this rhythm section.

Generally speaking, a rhythm section is just drums and bass. AC/DC's rhythm section was drums, bass and rhythm guitar. As far as I'm aware, Malcolm never once took a solo. He barely ever moved away from his amp, except to go up to the backing-vocal mic and shout: "Oi! Oi!" He just stood at the back, with one eye on Phil Rudd, knowing full well that on the other side of the stage you've got Cliff Williams, who never moved an inch, and had the best right hand in the business when it came to timekeeping. Cliff didn't really need much of a left hand. As a rhythm guitar player in that band, Malcolm was phenomenal. He had such a metronomic feel.

Malcolm and Angus came from the right place. Their roots were R&B, Chuck Berry and all that stuff, but a little further out from that you could tell that they'd listened to Peter Green and a lot of the Rolling Stones. They had that simplistic 'if it ain't broke don't fix it' attitude.

We opened for AC/DC on the *Highway To Hell* tour in 1979, but I've no idea what Malcolm was like as a person. I'm not saying he was shy, he just kept his cards close to his chest. He'd acknowledge you – a nod, like, 'How are you doing?' – but he would never sit down and have a chat like Bon did. I found that AC/DC was cliquey. Bon and Cliff were very amiable, but when it came to the Australian side of AC/DC they were very standoffish. In fairness, Angus came into our dressing room a few times, but Malcolm didn't really talk to us.

When we started working with Mutt [Lange, producer for AC/DC and Def Leppard], he told us that it was an absolute joy to have Malcolm doing the rhythms, because he was just on it. Some of their earlier records were out of tune, but with the albums that Mutt produced – *Highway To Hell*, *Back In Black* and *For Those About To Rock* – the sound was so much more focused, not just for Malcolm but for all of the band. In those records you can hear the left and right guitars so well. The interplay between them was fantastic. And Mutt wouldn't have just taken one performance for a track. He was the only guy that ever had the balls to tell them: "No, we'll do that one again."

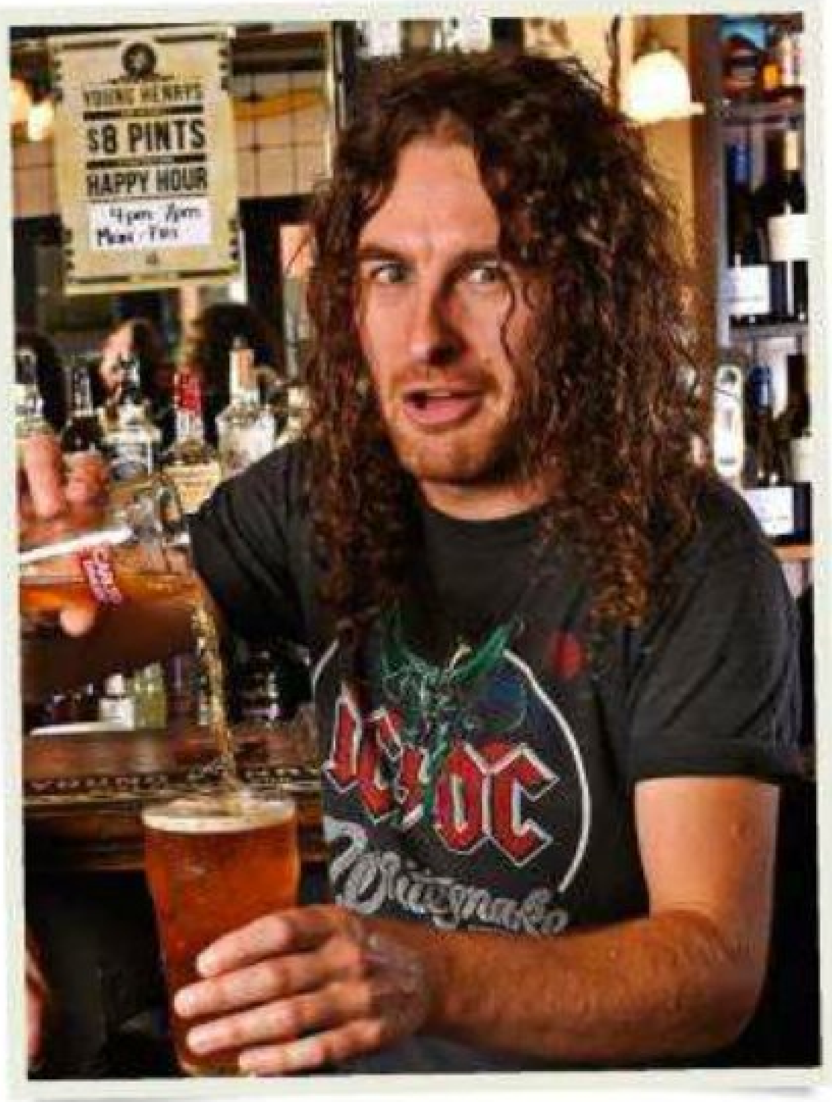
Highway To Hell is a stunning record. *Back In Black* – hard to argue with, isn't it? But for me, *Powerage* is AC/DC's best record. It's got everything – amazing songs, great performances. Listen to *Powerage* now and you'll really feel what a great player Malcolm Young was.

ROSS HALFIN/PRESS

"It is a sad day in rock'n'roll. Malcolm Young was my friend and the heart and soul of AC/DC. I had some of the best times of my life with him on our 1984 European tour." *Edward Van Halen*

THE SUPERFAN

By Joel O'Keeffe, Airbourne



I was about six years old when I first discovered AC/DC through this TV programme called *Rage*. I saw Malcolm with his guitar and his blue singlet, and I said to Mum: "Can I get a blue singlet for my birthday?" Y'know, it's not a standard kids' request, like a fire truck or a toy gun. But I wanted to be like this guy on the TV. Then, once I discovered the AC/DC records, I found there was this button on my dad's old stereo that I'd press and all of a sudden I'd have Malcolm's isolated guitar panned over to the left speaker.

It was the greatest way to learn guitar. Y'know, when to pull back, when to drive, when to pick it up, when to charge that thing home. Most bands, they're all following the drummer. With AC/DC they're all looking at Malcolm: when to go up, when to go down, when to start, when to finish.

No music teacher is gonna teach you how to play like Malcolm, and you can't learn it from sheet music. It's the feel and attitude. In AC/DC's *Let There Be Rock*, right from the get-go you can hear Malcolm's primal, Glaswegian, fuck-you attitude. To learn how he plays – or even to understand it – would take forever. Because the guy is constantly building it up – like in *Let There Be Rock* – and then he'll bring you back down. It's unwavering. With Bon Scott running around, stealing people's women, with the cops after him and all this sort of shit, you needed Malcolm to keep it all going, just to keep that guy under control.

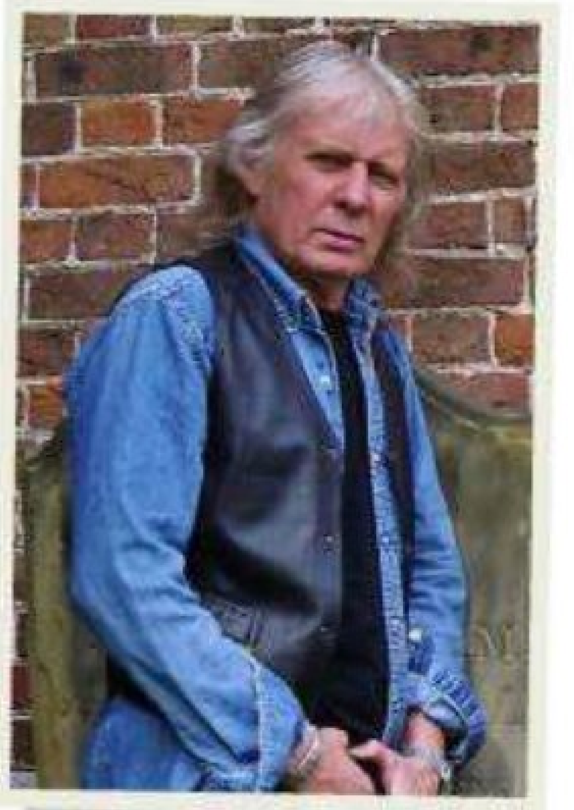
I bet no one's mentioned this, but one of the really unsung things about Malcolm is his backing vocals. They're often overlooked, but they're as distinctive as his guitar. Without them you don't have that AC/DC sound. They give you that blokey-ness. The dirtiness comes from his vocals. It's one of the most important parts, woven into the AC/DC tartan fabric. And when you've blown your voice out singing along with Bon or Brian, you can still sing along with Malcolm.

I saw AC/DC on the *Ballbreaker* tour, the *Stiff Upper Lip* tour and the *Black Ice* tour. On the *Stiff Upper Lip* tour I found a spot right in front of Malcolm's cabs, and the mix I had was kick, snare and Malcolm's guitar. It was so fucking loud and awesome. I stayed in that little pocket the whole night. Malcolm is the biggest star in AC/DC, definitely among musicians. All guitarists love Malcolm, just as much as Angus.

I was never fortunate enough to meet the guy, but like everyone else who grew up listening to his guitar and his band it kinda feels like an uncle has passed away that you never met but you felt like you knew. All my good times have been through listening to AC/DC. Down here in Melbourne, Cherry Bar have just painted a huge mural of Malcolm on the side of the entire building. And if you walked in there today and said: "Can you just put the left speaker on and play some Malcolm Young," they would do it. Because everyone feels like they know him. And everyone knows what he meant to AC/DC.

THE QUIET ONE

By 'Fast' Eddie Clarke, Fastway



I first met Malcolm in 1976 when we [Motörhead] supported AC/DC in Bath when Bon was still with them. We shared a dressing room. I'd seen in *Sounds* that they were getting fantastic reviews of their residency at the Marquee every week, so I was keen to check them out. Motörhead's equipment wasn't great and the gig was in a fucking tin hut, so we sounded awful – it was maybe our fifth gig. Then they came on and, man, they sounded magnificent.

Fastway did some arena dates with AC/DC in America in late eighty-three, up to twenty-five thousand people a night, and they were great to us: we could have all the sound and lights except the special ones that were part of their show, which was fair enough. I watched them every night.

On that tour I sometimes drank with Malcolm at the bar and I occasionally travelled with them on their bus, but he tended to be a man of few words, and some of what he said I struggled to understand because that Aussie-Scottish accent of his was pretty thick. One thing I told him was to change that fucking guitar of his. He had that old Gretsch with one pick-up missing. But what that said to me was: we're a fucking great rock band, you don't need a fancy-looking guitar, just an instrument that plays good. You've just gotta rock.

During those six years I didn't notice much change in Malcolm as a person. Apart from Brian [Johnson], who was the life and soul of the party, they were quiet, almost shy. Not up themselves at all. Up on the stage you'd never seen a band work so hard. They talk about Keith Richards, but for me Malcolm was a *real* rhythm guitar player. You never heard him unless you listened. That's the whole idea of a rhythm player. Him and Cliff [Williams] would just stand at the back and get lost for the night in AC/DC World. What they did was faultless.

I was shocked by Malcolm's death because it's the end of the best band in the world – that's what AC/DC were to me.

JOEL O'KEEFFE: JOHN MCMURTRIE/PRESS
INTERVIEWS BY PAUL ELLIOTT, DAVE LING AND HENRY YATES

FANS REMEMBER MALCOLM

via classicrockmagazine.com

THE FAN #1

Matt Precey

I was thirteen when I heard AC/DC and for the first time the universe made sense. Being a teenager can be pretty crap, and this music was an escape from the awkwardness and the boredom, at once an awakening and a doorway into a new world. Their pull continues well into my middle age, providing relief from a different set of pressures.

Rock'n'roll defined the lives of millions. Malcolm Young defined rock'n'roll. The most important musician most people have never heard of. So what made Malcolm the five-foot-two colossus became? The riffs. And the single-minded determination to succeed, allied to some very shrewd decision making.

But what is often overlooked in the band's alchemy is the acute sense of timing. You could set your watch by Phil Rudd's drumming, but there was also something indefinable going on with the brothers' guitars. Dig out the 1976 Peel Session of *Live Wire* on YouTube and you will hear it: everything clicking like clockwork.

THE FAN #2

Juan (JJRM)

AC/DC have been a very important part of my life and still are. I met Malcolm Young briefly in October 1996 on the *Ballbreaker* tour in Buenos Aires, Argentina. I was sixteen. A couple of fans and me were at the hotel where they were staying, the night before the concert. Someone invited us to approach to a van where Malcolm was waiting for us inside to sign our stuff and shake hands...

In 2000 I was in the US spending my first trip abroad with one of my best friends. We were in New York. One day we were visiting the Virgin Megastore, a couple of days before *Stiff Upper Lip was released*. We discovered a flyer, saying: 'AC/DC first in-store appearance in many years.' In order to go, we needed to change the date of our flight.

We showed up at eight a.m. and were third in the queue. At four p.m. we were invited into the store and given several instructions for when we met them – no pictures, and only two items to sign. But we asked Malcolm and Angus for a picture. Both accepted. Having the chance to talk with Mal, we told him how far we had come and that we changed our flight just to meet them.

Malcolm said thanks twice, and signed all the stuff we asked for (more than two!) After we left, my friend asked me why I didn't ask for a guitar pick. I called in a loud voice: "Malcolm! Malcolm!" He looked at us, and that was when I asked for a pick. Malcolm calls us. He searched in his pockets for a pick, but he didn't find one. He asked Angus. He found a pick that he gave to Mal and give me the pick. He said thank you for coming from that far and for changing the ticket. They stayed there signing autographs until 10pm.

More fan tributes at classicrockmagazine.com

"Not only did Malcolm co-found one of the greatest bands in the world, he co-wrote the songs that inspired many of us to wanna be in a band." *Nikki Sixx*

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SHAPERS OF THINGS

They had Eric Clapton. They had Jeff Beck. They had Jimmy Page. In the late 60s no other band could get close to them. And without **The Yardbirds** there would be no Led Zeppelin.

Words: **Mick Wall**

Saturday night in New York: March 30, 1968 – the summer of hate almost upon us. Five nights later Martin Luther King Jr. will be shot and killed in Memphis. Two months later Bobby Kennedy will be similarly assassinated. By the end of the year Richard Milhous Nixon will be elected 37th President of the United States.

The Beatles' *Hey Jude* may be the biggest-selling single of the year, but it's the record's B-side, *Revolution*, that speaks loudest to the generation of longhairs and acid trippers lining up outside the Anderson Theatre on 66 Second Avenue on this cold spring night, here to see The Yardbirds – Britain's grooviest band. Or what's left of them. Three dates into their eighth US tour in four years, although guitarist Jimmy Page and bassist Chris Dreja don't know it yet, this will be the last tour the band ever do.

"We lost enthusiasm for it," drummer and co-founder Jim McCarty says now. "We just didn't have the energy for it. If we'd had a long break and sat down and had a rest and taken time to think of new songs, it might have been an idea. But everything back then was based on working, playing every night." He sighs. "They thought if you had six months off no one would recognise you any more."

Nevertheless, it seemed a strange time to call a halt to what had been one of the most inventive, famous and influential bands of the Swinging Sixties. The world may have been going to hell – aka Vietnam's Mekong Delta – but rock music was fast approaching its apotheosis. When serious music fans weren't out on a Magical Mystery Tour in chase of an under-dressed Mrs Robinson, they were tripping in a White Room listening to Janis screaming for them to take another Piece Of My Heart, or leaning over wide-eyed at innocent passers-by telling them Hello, I Love You, while all the while two riders were approaching…

The Yardbirds – famous for proto-psych hits like *For Your Love, Shapes Of Things* and *Over, Upwards, Sideways, Down* – had also been home to the three best guitarists in England: Eric Clapton, Jeff Beck and, now, Jimmy Page. Had appeared in seminal art-house flicks like Antonio's *Blow-Up*. Were worshipped by up-and-comers like David Bowie, Rod Stewart, Steven Tyler, Alice Cooper, Lemmy, Gary Moore, Alex Lifeson… The Yardbirds were walking, talking history – even by 1968.

But instead of sticking around for the transformation into album artists that would transform contemporaries such as The Who, The Kinks, Cream and the Stones into global superstars in the late-60s, The Yardbirds were about to throw in the towel. Why?

> **'The Yardbirds had always been fantastically flash, inscrutably cool, fabulously out of reach.'**

The trouble, says McCarty, was: "We were desperate. We didn't want to do another Yardbirds tour."

He and singer Keith Relf had been talking privately about splitting for months.

"We wanted a change – to do some other kinds of songs, some different music. Something refreshing. After playing that heavy stuff night after night, in the end it wasn't going anywhere… But they wanted to carry on."

'They' were Dreja and Page. And yes they bloody well did want to carry on.

Or Jimmy Page did, anyway.

It was a real sliding doors moment that night at the Anderson Theatre. You only have to listen to the live recording of the show – now immortalised for the first time officially on the just-released *Yardbirds '68* album (produced and digitally remastered by Page, and now available on various formats through his official website) – to grasp what might have been had McCarty and Relf not wanted out so badly.

It's not overstating the case to describe this as proto-Led Zeppelin. And no shame in wondering what this band would have achieved had Page not left just three months later to find a new singer and rhythm section to play with – in what was originally announced at the time as being The Yardbirds Featuring Jimmy Page, then just weeks later the New Yardbirds. Then, even more suddenly, spookily, a whole new other thing – supposedly – called Led Zeppelin.

In fact, listening to the live '68 album, 'the New Yardbirds' really would have been a more accurate description of the outfit Page pulled together in the months that followed that Anderson Theatre show. Because, it's all right there in New York in March

ALAMY

1968. Not just the sonic templates of *Train Kept A-Rolling*, *Dazed And Confused* and *White Summer* – but also in the whole smart-arse, 'don't try this at home, we are your overlords' vibe.

The Yardbirds had always been fantastically flash, inscrutably cool, fabulously out of reach. Their early shows were self-described as 'rave-ups' – wild, hair-down, knickers-off parties for the wilfully far out, the fashionably fuck you. They weren't dirty rockers, but they were photographed riding Harleys. They weren't poncey mods but they dressed to the nines, part King's Road, part Haight-Ashbury.

"You couldn't touch them," Lemmy would tell me years later. "Especially the line-up with Jeff Beck in it. It was the same feeling I got when I later saw the MC5 – they just attacked you, went for the jugular. When Page joined it became a bit more experimental but it was still the same sort of vibe – very daring. I always liked that."

Indeed the musical journey The Yardbirds undertook in their short but adventure-filled five years together went through so many twists and turns that their career seemed to nutshell the melting-pot atmosphere of the 60s as clearly as did that of The Beatles and the Rolling Stones.

They formed in May 1963 around the creative nucleus of 20-year-olds Keith Relf (blond, singer, harmonica player, lyric writer and screamy-teen pin-up), and Paul Samwell-Smith (dark-haired bassist, guitarist, keyboard player, vocalist, percussionist, producer and all-round leading light). As members of the Metropolitan Blues Quartet they had played on the same jazz-blues circuit as the Stones. Before teaming up with 20-year-old Jim McCarty (drummer, vocalist, guitarist) and two other schoolboy pals – 18-year-old Chris Dreja (guitar, bass, keyboards) and 15-year-old Anthony 'Top' Topham – the band's first lead guitarist. ▷

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Looking glum, but the future's bright: (l-r) Keith Relf, Chris Dreja, Eric Clapton, Jim McCarty, Paul Samwell-smith.

"I want to contribute a great deal more to The Yardbirds than just standing there looking glum." Jimmy Page

The man who would be God: Eric Clapton (right) with The Yardbirds in 1964.

Taking their name from seminal jazz-junkie dead-legend Charlie 'Yardbird' Parker, the started out playing covers: Howlin' Wolf, Muddy Waters, Bo Diddley, Elmore James – strictly high-quality underground purist R&B.

Which is how they hooked up with Eric Clapton, an 18-year-old blues disciple who'd recently been in The Roosters, a short-lived R&B band. When Top bailed to get a proper job, Clapton took his place.

By then The Yardbirds had replaced the Stones as the house band at the Crawdaddy Club in Richmond, and owner Giorgio Gomelsky had become their manager. Gomelsky was a typical 60s mover-and-shaker, ran clubs, wrote songs, made films, produced records… Whatever you needed, Giorgio could get it. Fast.

For the next 18 months The Yardbirds toured as the backing band for Sonny Boy Williamson II. Giorgio had the foresight to record some of the shows, and released them two years later, at the height of Yardbirds-mania, as the album *Sonny Boy Williamson And The Yardbirds*. In the meantime he landed the band a deal in their own right with EMI.

Not that the album sold. In fact nothing The Yardbirds did sold during the early Clapton days. And certainly not their debut album, *Five Live Yardbirds*, an R&B purist's delight released into the commercial abyss at the end of 1964.

Enter Giorgio with an even better idea: a song so obviously a hit-in-waiting that its publisher, Ronnie Beck of Feldman's, was on his way to try to convince The Beatles to record it when Giorgio stepped in and grabbed it first.

Written by 19-year-old future 10cc star Graham Gouldman, *For Your Love* was both the making of The Yardbirds and the breaking of Eric Clapton, who called it "pop crap". Led off by Brian Auger on harpsichord, the recording was made by Relf and McCarty along with session musicians on bass and bongos, and Samwell-Smith in the control room 'directing'.

Clapton and Dreja were called in only for the freak-out mid-section. But even that was too much for Eric, and he bailed straight afterwards to join John Mayall's Bluesbreakers. In an age of art for art's sake, hit singles for fuck sake, blues-precious Clapton just didn't fit in. Not even when the single hit the Top 10 in both Britain and America.

His replacement, a 21-year-old maverick called Jeff Beck, would be no pushover either. "I didn't like them when I first met them," Beck said. "They didn't say hi or anything. They were pissed off that Eric had left; they had thought that the whole Yardbirds sound had gone."

Unlike Clapton, though, Beck craved the spotlight in a way that would shame a firefly. "I wanted people to look at me, know what I was doing," he would say. "I'm not one of those guys who wants to fade into the background on stage."

There was never any danger of that as the next 12 months found Beck leading The Yardbirds through hit after hit, each more rule-bending than the last.

This, though, had sprung from another sliding-doors moment in the career of The Yardbirds. For Beck had not been the band's first choice as Clapton's replacement. That had been Jimmy Page, at the time the most accomplished and versatile guitarist in Britain, with hard-won experience and musical nous far superior to that of either Clapton or Beck.

But Page turned them down. Not because he was a blues purist or had a problem with the idea of performing hits, but because he was out of their league. By 1964, Page had already played as a session guitarist on dozens of UK chart hits for

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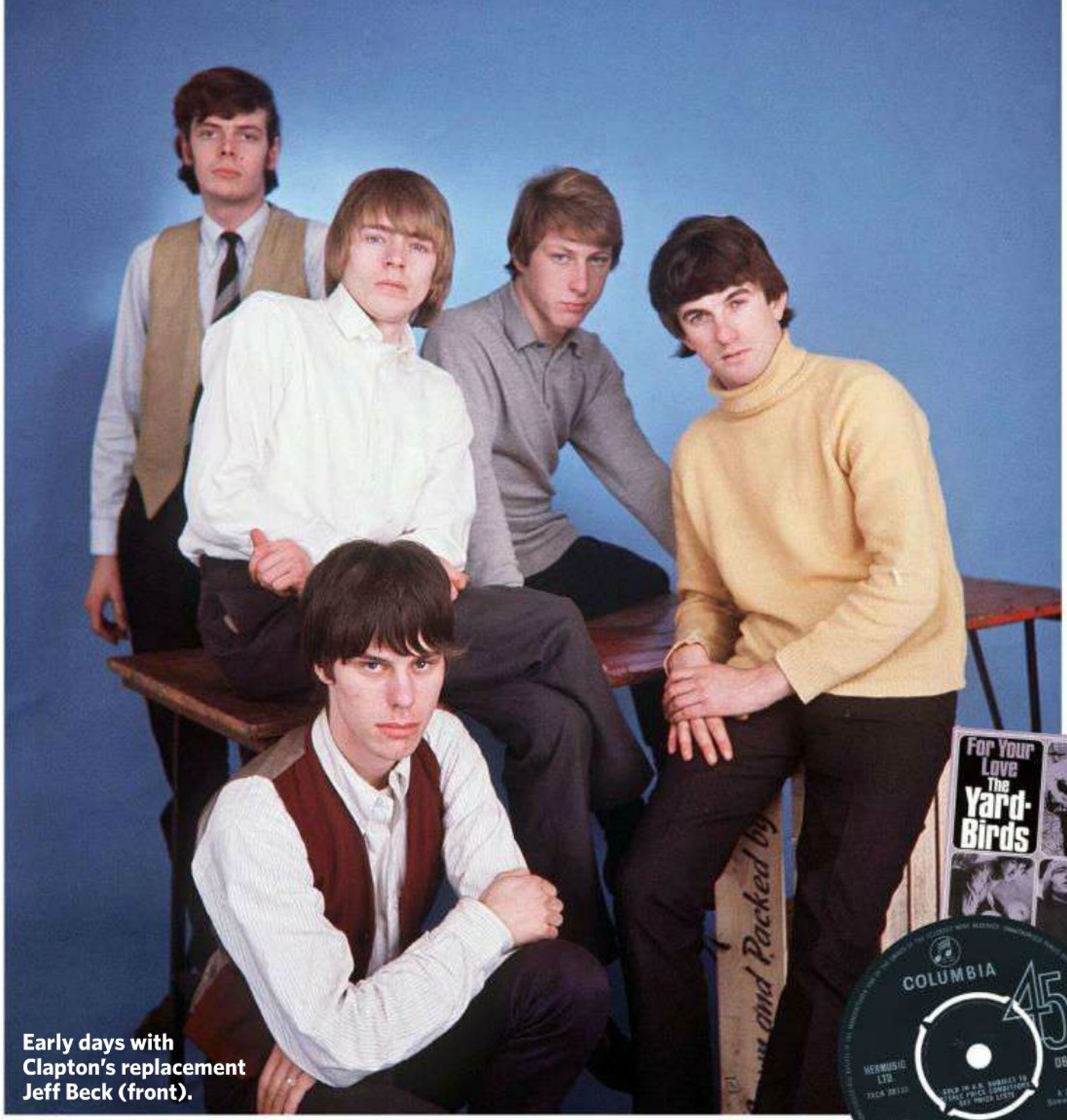
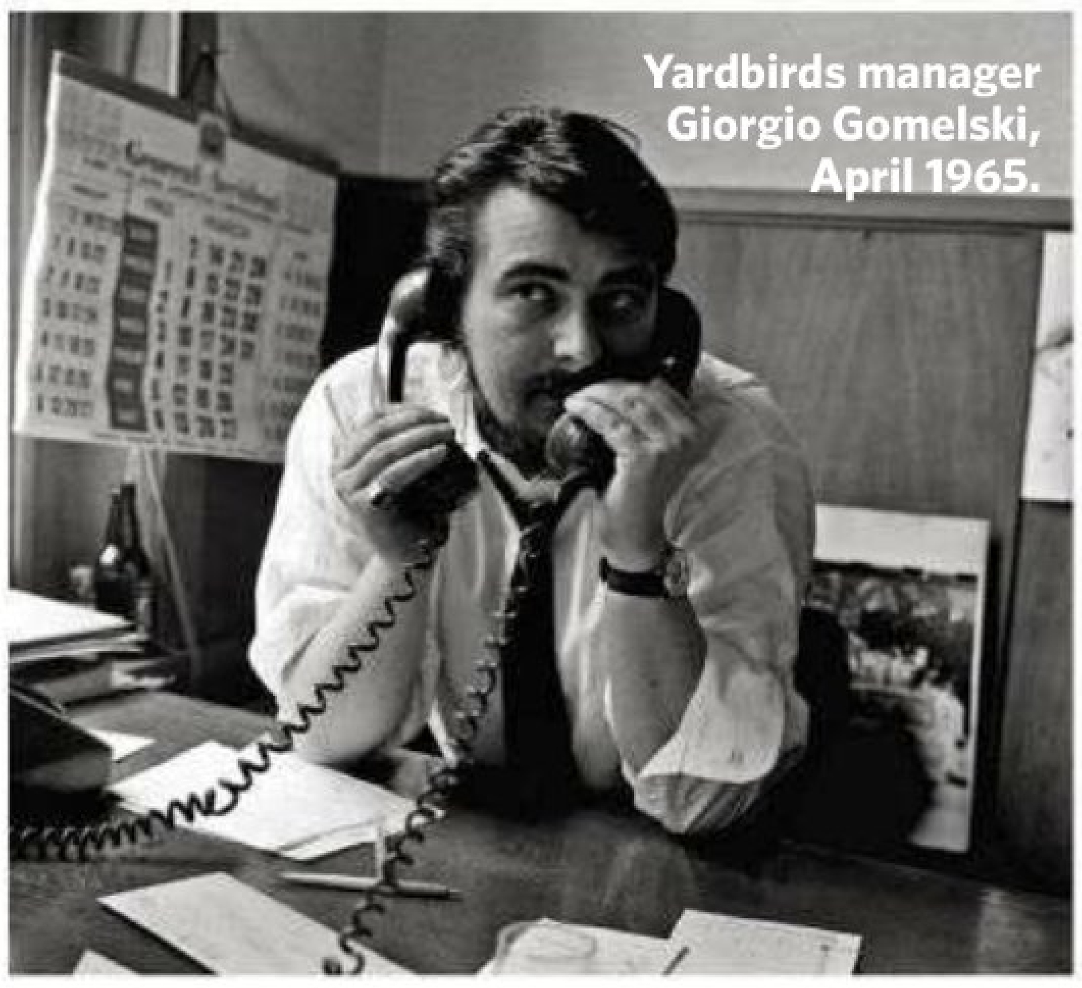
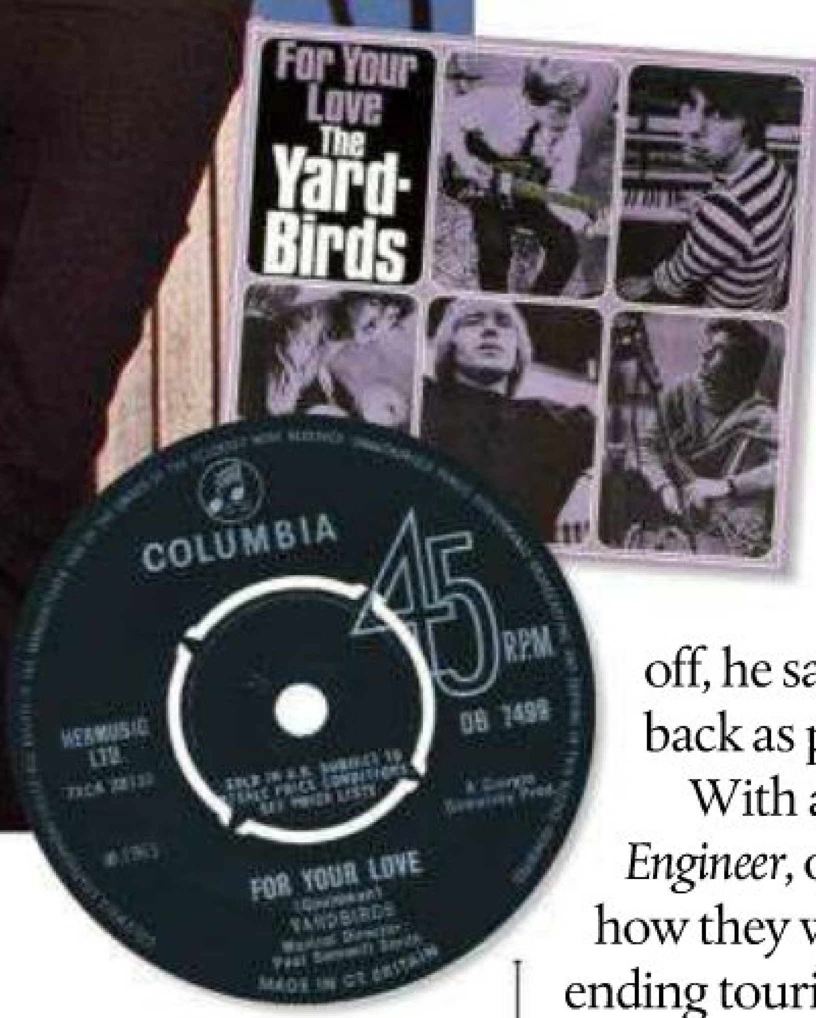


Early days with Clapton's replacement Jeff Beck (front).



Yardbirds manager Giorgio Gomelski, April 1965.



dozens of artists including Shirley Bassey (*Goldfinger*), the Nashville Teens (*Tobacco Road*), Dave Berry (*The Crying Game*) and Them (*Baby, Please Don't Go*), and countless others for The Kinks, The Who, Herman's Hermits, Lulu, on and on, for years to come. Hey, when you've played on mega-hits, who cares about one-hit wonders like The Yardbirds?

But Page did know someone who might care: his friend and fellow guitarist Jeff Beck. Beck was one of those cats on the fringes, partly by choice. A brilliant soloist, he was an individualist, and his stints in various R&B bands of the period – The Nightshift, The Rumble, The Tridents – were built for speed not comfort.

Beck was "sitting around doing nothing" when one day at Page's house, Jimmy played him *Five Live Yardbirds*, then asked what he thought. Jeff thought he needed a gig. And with Jimmy offering to recommend him, he was in the studio three weeks later recording the next Yardbirds single, another Graham Gouldman song – and obvious hit-in-the-making – *Heart Full Of Soul*.

For the next couple of years The Yardbirds, with Beck on lead guitar, were at the peak of their powers, commercially, artistically, pop- and rock-tastically. They had a string of major hit singles in Britain and America – all Gouldman-written or blues covers, until they came to their seventh single, *Shapes Of Things*, credited to McCarty, Relf and Samwell-Smith. It reached No.3 in the UK in March 1966 and soon after that the Top 10 in the US.

With its marching-army-of-robots rhythm, its feedback-laden guitar solo, its tang of the Asiatic, *Shapes Of Things* was the most exotic-sounding single of the year. So much so that music historians now cite it as possibly the first truly psychedelic record.

But Beck did not share in the writing credits, and this appeared to only increase his already chafed relationship with the rest of the band.

"He was always a lovely guy, Jeff," says McCarty, "and I used to really like him. But when it came to playing he was different. You never really knew what was going to happen. You never really knew what sort of mood he was going to be in. And that depended a lot on what sort of sound he got on stage. If he got a good sound on stage he'd be quite happy and it would be a happy gig. But the reverse was that he'd get very angry."

To the point where it would sabotage shows?

"It could do. He could kick an amp off stage or kick an amp over or he could walk off. He usually did the whole gig. He didn't disappear. But he walked off one time on one TV show we were doing. He didn't like the mix of his guitar, it was too quiet. And we were just miming."

"You couldn't touch them. Especially the line-up with Jeff Beck in it. They just attacked you, went for the jugular."

Lemmy

It was Samwell-Smith, though, who was the first to leave, after they played a drunken gig at the annual May Ball at Queens College in Oxford, which turned into a near-brawl between Relf and some of the students. Outraged, Smith stormed off, he said, never to return. (Although he was back as producer shortly after.)

With a new album, *Yardbirds*, aka *Roger The Engineer*, out to promote, and panicking about how they were going to continue their never-ending touring schedule, Jimmy Page, who was there, half-jokingly said: "I'll do it." Then happily 'allowed' the others to talk him into it. In fact Page, by then suffocating on the session scene, had watched with increasing envy the success of The Yardbirds with his old pal Beck as their career took off around the world. It wasn't about the money – he still earned more in a week than most bands like The Yardbirds did in a month – it was the thought of making his own music, for once.

"I want to contribute a great deal more to The Yardbirds than just standing there looking glum," Page told the *NME* at the time. "I was drying up as a guitarist. I was playing a lot of rhythm guitar on sessions, which is very dull. It left me no time to practise. Most of the musicians I know think I have done the right thing in joining The Yardbirds."

Three nights later, Page made his debut with The Yardbirds – on bass – at the Marquee in London. His first recording with them was at the Marquee studios the following day for a Yardley Great Shakes advert (*'It's so creamy/Thick and dreamy'*) that was based on their current UK hit *Over Under Sideways Down*. That was followed with 24 more British dates in such salubrious locales as the Co-Op Ballroom in Gravesend and the Pavilion Arts Centre in Buxton.

Then, on Friday August 5, 1966, Page played his first show in ▷

The Yardbirds on pop TV show *Ready Steady Go!* in June 1965: (l-r) Dreja, McCarty, Beck, Relf, Samwell-Smith.

MAIN: REX; INSETS: ALAMY x2

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The Yardbirds in '66: (clockwise from top left) Page, Dreja, Beck, Relf, McCarty.

Keith Relf, 1965.

'The Yardbirds' *Happenings Ten Years Time Ago* was more than simple pop psychedelia. This was ground-zero 70s rock.'

America with the band, at the Minneapolis Auditorium. By now Chris Dreja had been moved over on to the bass, making way for Page to take over guitar, forming with Beck what would be the first 'twin-solo' guitar line-up in British rock. It should have made The Yardbirds the most incendiary group on the planet – not just weighty like Cream, or laddish like the Stones, and certainly more nail-biting than The Beatles, who would retire from touring just three weeks later.

"It definitely gave the band a kick up the arse," says Chris Dreja now, who also says he wasn't put out when Page took his place as guitarist. "Not at all. No, no. I'm a man who knows his own limitations," he says. Then jokingly suggests that Page wasn't moved up from bass to guitar because he was the better guitarist, but because Page was such a bad bass player. "As a bass player he was rubbish. Too many bloody notes, mate!"

Having been the 'other guitarist' to Clapton, Beck and Page, who did he rate as the best?

"I enjoyed playing with all of them. They all came with such individual characteristics. Eric was a blues man. With Jeff you never knew what he was coming up with. He was a bloody genius, wasn't he? But I loved to play with Jimmy. He was full of energy. *Go go go!* And I liked that. He was very positive. Still is today. He's a wonderful man."

Dreja and Page revelled in life on the road in America – "Americans bands and musicians were so creative, such really great people to get to know," says Dreja. "So many stories… being in a basement with Janis Joplin drinking Southern Comfort, things like that… All the wonderful people you met on the road, you became almost like one big family."

Keith Relf, however, was feeling the slog. Disillusioned, disgruntled and often drunk, Relf would later claim that the best days of The Yardbirds had been when Eric was still in it; before *For Your Love* – and in its wake the arrival of Jeff. "The happiest times were playing London clubs like the Marquee and the Crawdaddy Club," he said in 1974. "With Eric it was a blues band." After that, "it became a commercial band. We started touring the States, doing Dick Clark tours, playing one-nighters and that kind of thing."

But at least Relf kept going. Beck now suddenly decided he wanted to stop completely.

"It was being on the road that got to Jeff," claimed Relf. "He didn't want to go out any more. We stayed in Hollywood for a bit… it's a bit of a painful period to go over. It was during a Dick Clark tour, all right, which is heavy enough anyway. We had a few days off and Jeff fell in love with Hollywood. We went out on the road, and by the second day Jeff had had enough. So he flew back to Hollywood. And henceforth the final stage of The Yardbirds."

To be more accurate, Beck had fallen in love with a Hollywood actress called Mary Hughes. "It was over Mary that he left The Yardbirds," Relf admitted with a shrug. A 22-year-old blonde beauty who had been 'discovered' on the beach in Malibu, Hughes had starred in a handful of 'bikini' movies like *Muscle Beach Party* (1964) and drive-in B-reels like *Fireball* (1966). She would also star alongside Elvis Presley in *Thunder Alley* (1967). None of these were Oscar-material. But Mary's looks were pure platinum, and Beck fell for her hard. (So hard he wrote a song for her, *Psycho Daisies*, and sang the lead when it was a Yardbirds B-side.)

Refusing to leave LA, Beck stayed behind with Hughes while the rest of the band soldiered on as a four-piece. A press release was issued explaining that Beck was "ill".

In an oblique reference to that incident in an early-70s interview with *Rolling Stone*, Beck explained: "I really wanted Jim Page on lead guitar with me because I knew it would sound sensational. We had fun. I remember doing some really nice jobs with Page. It lasted about four or five months, then I had this throat thing come on, inflamed tonsils, and what with inflamed brain, inflamed tonsils and an inflamed cock and everything else…"

Beck returned to the band for a September '66 tour in Britain opening for the Stones, but the writing was on the wall. His final bow with them came with his now legendary appearance with the band in the 1967 film *Blow-Up*. Italian producer Michelangelo Antonioni had tried unsuccessfully to get The Who for the scene, then the more psychedelic Tomorrow – although how their guitarist, future Yes star Steve Howe would have handled the guitar-smashing segment in the film is anybody's guess.

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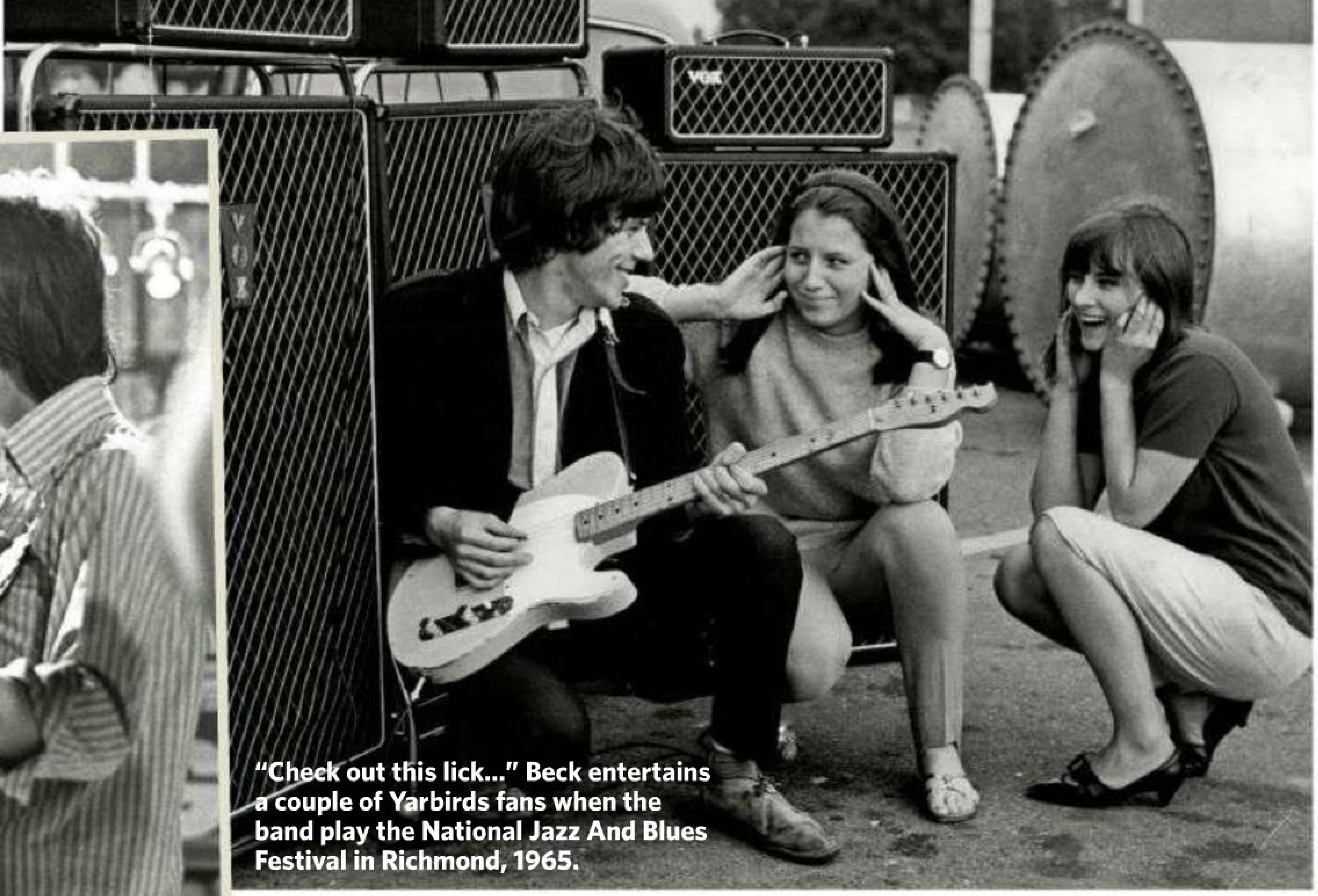
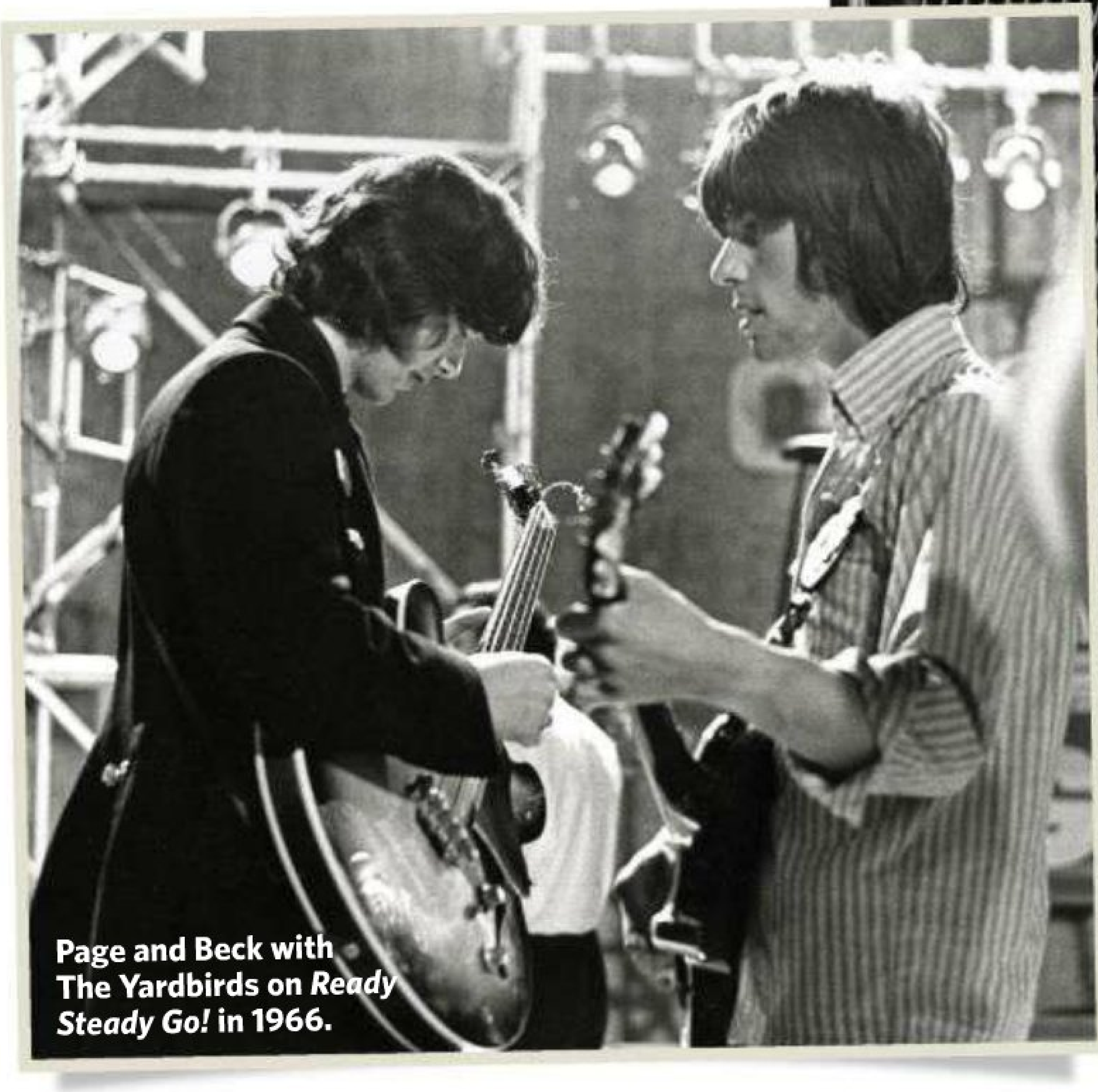


"Check out this lick..." Beck entertains a couple of Yarbirds fans when the band play the National Jazz And Blues Festival in Richmond, 1965.



Page and Beck with The Yardbirds on *Ready Steady Go!* in 1966.

Although both McCarty and Dreja chuckle heartily now over their appearance in what is now remembered as one of the late 60s' most preposterous and self-consciously impenetrable 'underground films', watching them plough through *Stroll On* in the film today is instructive of the way The Yardbirds with Beck and Page in it really were. Beck: solemn, threatening; Page: smiley, cool, noooo problem.

Beck of course hated being the one to "do a Townshend", as he put it, in the film and smash his guitar. "I didn't mind playing a very wild number with lots of violence in it, lots of chords smashing away, but I didn't actually want to destroy the guitar. What a cheat: the first part shows me playing a Les Paul, and in the second part I'm smashing up a cheap old thity-five-dollar Japanese model."

Go to YouTube though and find one of their real live shows together and the overwhelming impression is of a band almost tripping over its own astonishing power. Not the musicianship, but those two huge personalities.

McCarty laughs. "I know! It was like the group was bursting out. It could hardly be contained. It was a very good combination with them both. I asked Jimmy the other day, actually: 'Did you enjoy it with Jeff?' He said: 'Oh yes, yeah!' But actually it was a bit much sometimes."

Dreja agrees. "Yeah, a lot of the time it was fantastic, and a lot of the time they'd be playing against each other. It was a bit of a cacophony sometimes. They were quite competitive. Jeff would inevitably suffer, because he was more insecure. But now and then it would work and it would be fantastic."

McCarty recalls the Beck-Page axis at its best one night outgunning the Stones: "I remember when we were on a tour with the Stones. We had a fantastic evening and the audience was delighted. And that was quite embarrassing for the Stones."

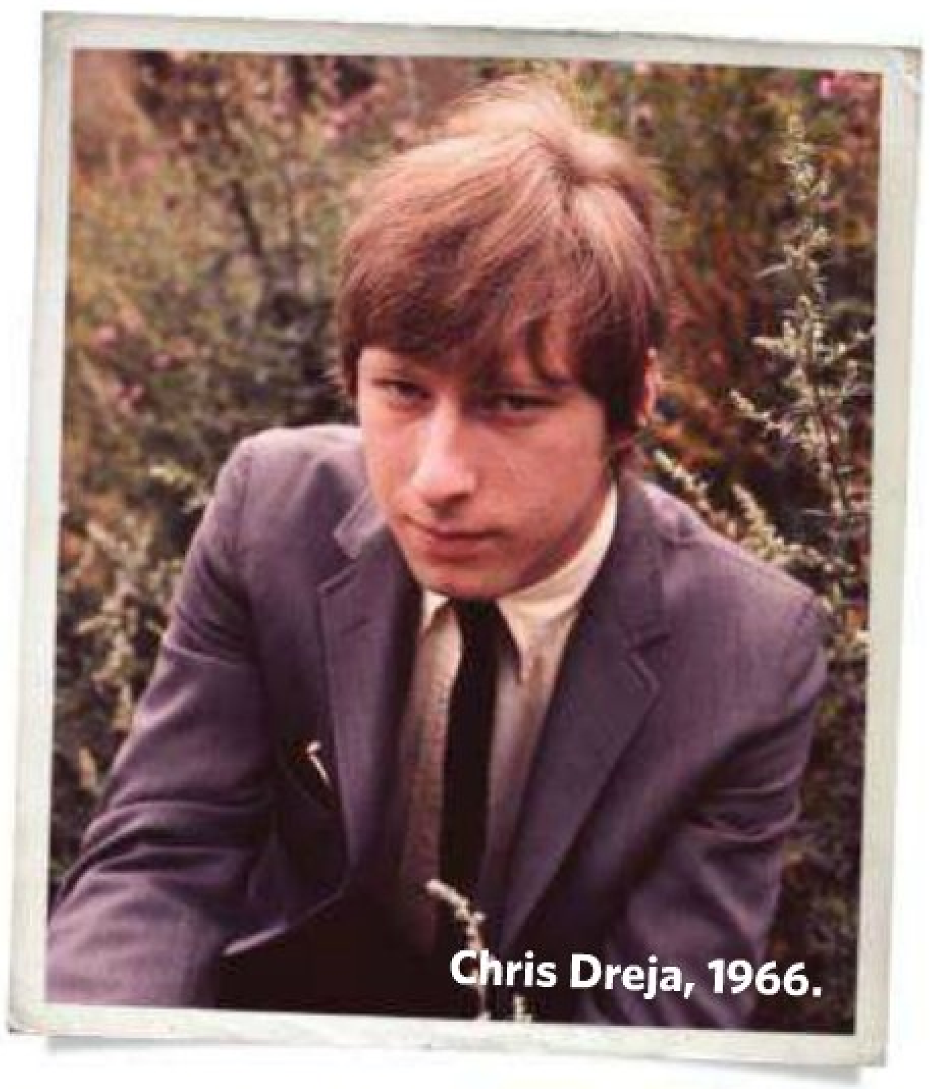
Sadly, the only real recordings this line-up of The Yardbirds got to make were the aforementioned *Stroll On*, their barely veiled 'reworking' of Tiny Bradshaw's *Train Kept A-Rollin* (basically a slightly different lyric written by Relf), done specifically for the *Blow-Up* soundtrack album, and one other that clearly signposted exactly where Jimmy Page intended to go next in his career – with or without The Yardbirds. It was called *Happenings Ten Years Time Ago* and it was a monumental piece of work. Released as a single in October 1966, months before first albums by Cream, Jimi Hendrix and Pink Floyd, at a time when The Beatles were topping the charts with *Yellow Submarine*, this was more than simple pop psychedelia. This was ground-zero 70s rock.

Hypnotically interweaving Eastern-influenced guitars, weapons-grade rhythms (with not Dreja on bass, but a top session pal of Jimmy's called John Paul Jones), ghostly vocals singing of time-travel, tripping on déjà vu and occult meaning, whispered backing vocals (*'Pop group are ya? Why you all got long hair?'*). If you're looking for the real rock roots of Led Zeppelin and every other out-there band that came helter-skelter in their wake, this is the definitive place to start.

And yet as a single it flopped: tiptoeing to No.30 in America, and brushing shoulders only briefly with the Top 40 in the UK – this despite an appearance on *Top Of The Pops*, taped on October 19.

"I thought it could have been commercial," says Jim McCarty. "But we sort of thought, well, we'll go no-holds-barred on that, really. Try and do something a bit different. Which is what we'd always done."

There is, however, one other significant recording Jeff Beck and Jimmy Page had made together that summer of '66. Before being offered the chance to join The Yardbirds, Page had been working towards putting his own band together. His initial idea was to lure Small Faces singer/guitarist Steve Marriott into a new outfit, or possibly Spencer Davis Group protégé Steve Winwood on vocals and keyboards, along with what Page now calls a "super-hooligan" rhythm section nicked from The Who: Keith Moon on drums and John Entwistle on bass.



Chris Dreja, 1966.

"As a bass player Jimmy Page was rubbish. Too many bloody notes, mate!"

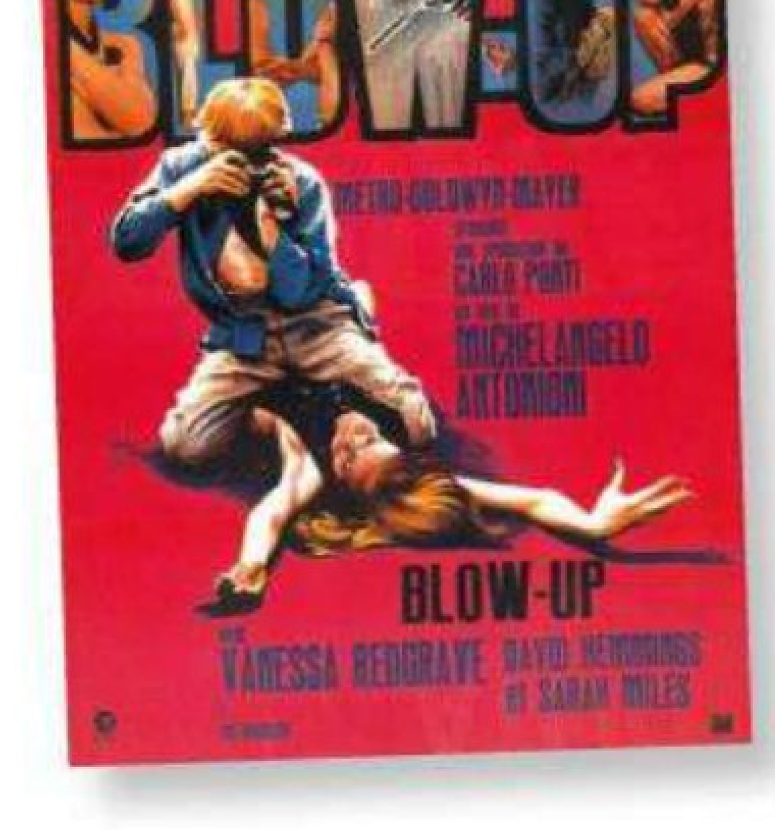
Chris Dreja

That had been in May, when Page had overseen the session at London's IBC studios that would produce the track *Beck's Bolero* – Jeff Beck's guitar-enflamed version of Ravel's *Bolero* originally intended to be his first solo single, and that Page would later insist he arranged, played on and produced.

"Jeff was playing and I was sort of in the [control booth]. And even though he said he wrote it, I wrote it. I'm playing all the electric and twelve-string, but it was supposed to be a solo record for him. The slide bits are his, and I'm just basically playing."

That, however, is something that Beck flatly refutes. "No, [Jimmy] didn't write that song. We sat down in his front room once, a little, tiny, pokey room, and he was sitting on the arm of a chair and he started playing that Ravel rhythm. He had a twelve-string and it sounded so full, really fat and heavy. I just played the melody. And I went home and worked out [the up-tempo section]."

In the end it hardly mattered. Producer Mickie Most – the Simon Cowell of his day; hits first, nothing else second – who would oversee Beck's later solo career, would eventually release it only as the B-side of Beck's single *Hi Ho Silver Lining*. Still, the guitarists continued to argue over who did what. The only thing they did later agree on is that line-up that played on *Beck's Bolero* could have been the "original" Led Zeppelin. ▷



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"I think they liked us." Dreja, Relf, Beck, Page and McCarty after a show in Los Angeles in September 1966.

Also on the session that night was John Paul Jones, who weeks later would be brought in, at Page's insistence, to play on The Yardbirds' *Happenings Ten Years Time Ago*. Later Jones arranged the strings on the *Yardbirds* track *Little Games* and played bass on their next single, *Ten Little Indians*.

The biggest presence at the *Bolero* session, though, was that of Keith Moon, who'd arrived at the studios in Langham Place wearing shades and a Cossack hat in case anybody saw and recognised him. Moon was at the time pissed off at The Who, fed up with Daltrey's constant fighting and Townshend's black moods. John Entwistle, who had also promised to turn up but backed out at the last minute, felt the same, Keith said, and both were looking for a way out of the grind of being the background to the Pete and Rog show.

Sensing an opportunity, Page laughingly suggested they all team up together: Keith and Jimmy and John and Jeff. (No mention of Jones, at this stage.) Moon got all excited and even accidentally suggested a name for the new line-up when he joked that it would go down like a lead zeppelin, meaning balloon. (Entwistle would later swear blind it was he who had suggested the name, but it was Moon that Page would later ask for his blessing to use the name.) Everyone had laughed at Keith, smoking cigarettes and speeding out of his head. But Jimmy had liked the idea – and the name – and tucked it away in his back pocket, like he had done a lot of good ideas over the past four years working in studios with frustrated musos. Half-Yardbirds, half-Who, pushed in the right direction by boss man Page.

Jim McCarty, 1966.

"We were desperate. We didn't want to do another Yardbirds tour."

Jim McCarty in early '68

All they would need was a good singer. Moony had said Entwistle could sing, but Jimmy was thinking more of Steve Winwood. Then Traffic started taking off big-time, so he thought of Marriott instead. Page knew Marriott well, knew he was up for anything. In fact the more he thought about it, the more he liked the idea: Jimmy, Jeff, Moony and Entwistle, with Stevie Marriott up front… What a supergroup that would be! Or as he later recalled: "It would have been the first of all those sort of bands, like Cream sort of thing."

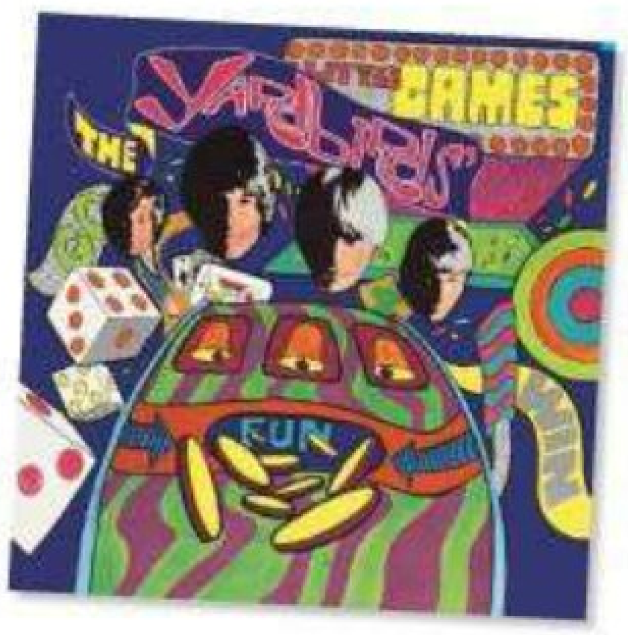
Not surprisingly, the success of the *Bolero* session had given Beck similar ideas, like two mates out for the night spotting and fancying the same girl. Keith Moon, he said, "had the most vicious drum sound and the wildest personality. At that point he wasn't turning up for Who sessions, so I thought that with a little wheeling and dealing I could sneak him away."

To what, though? At that stage the Jeff Beck Group was still more wishful thinking than reality, and there was his old pal Page, in the control booth, overseeing everything. Not that Beck didn't cotton on to all that. As he said: "That was probably the first Led Zeppelin band. Not with that name, but that kind of thing." Moony, he said "was the only hooligan who could play properly. I thought: 'This is it!' You could feel the excitement, not knowing what you were going to play, but just whoosh! It was great and there were all these things going on, but nothing really happened afterwards because Moony couldn't leave The Who."

That fact alone wasn't enough to deter Jimmy Page, and despite joining The Yardbirds just weeks later, behind the scenes he still put feelers out to see if Marriott might be interested in leaving the Small Faces to join forces with him in some new unspecified group project. "He was approached," Page would later reveal, "and seemed to be full of glee about it. A message came from the business side of Marriott, though, which said: 'How would you like to play guitar with broken fingers?'"

The "business side" of Marriott was Don Arden, the self-proclaimed "Al Capone of pop" and then the most notoriously gangster-like figure in the British music business.

When I asked Arden about this myself, before he succumbed to Alzheimer's disease in 2007, he smiled menacingly and said: "Later on I'd hang fucking [music entrepreneur] Robert Stigwood over a balcony for daring to try and take Stevie Marriott away from me. You think I'd let some little schlemiel from The Yardbirds have him?"



After that, said Page, "the idea sort of fell apart. We just said: 'Let's forget about the whole thing, quick.' Instead of being more positive

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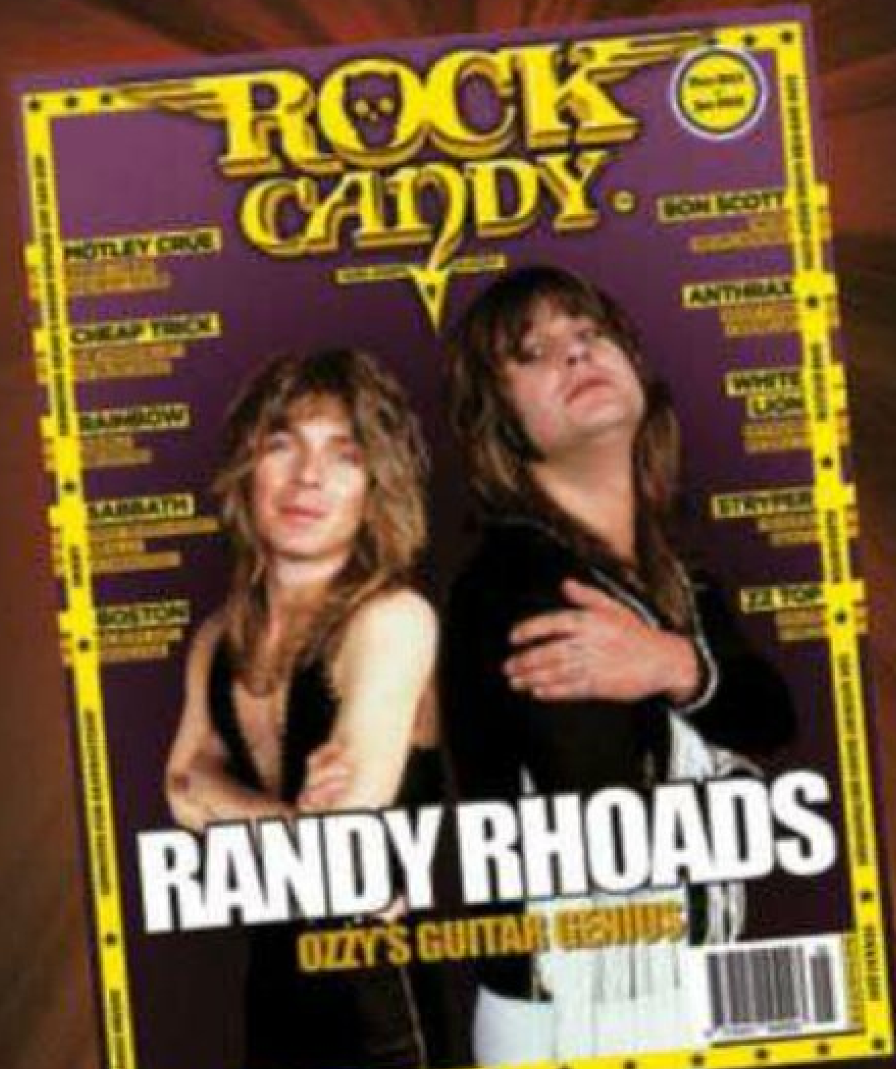

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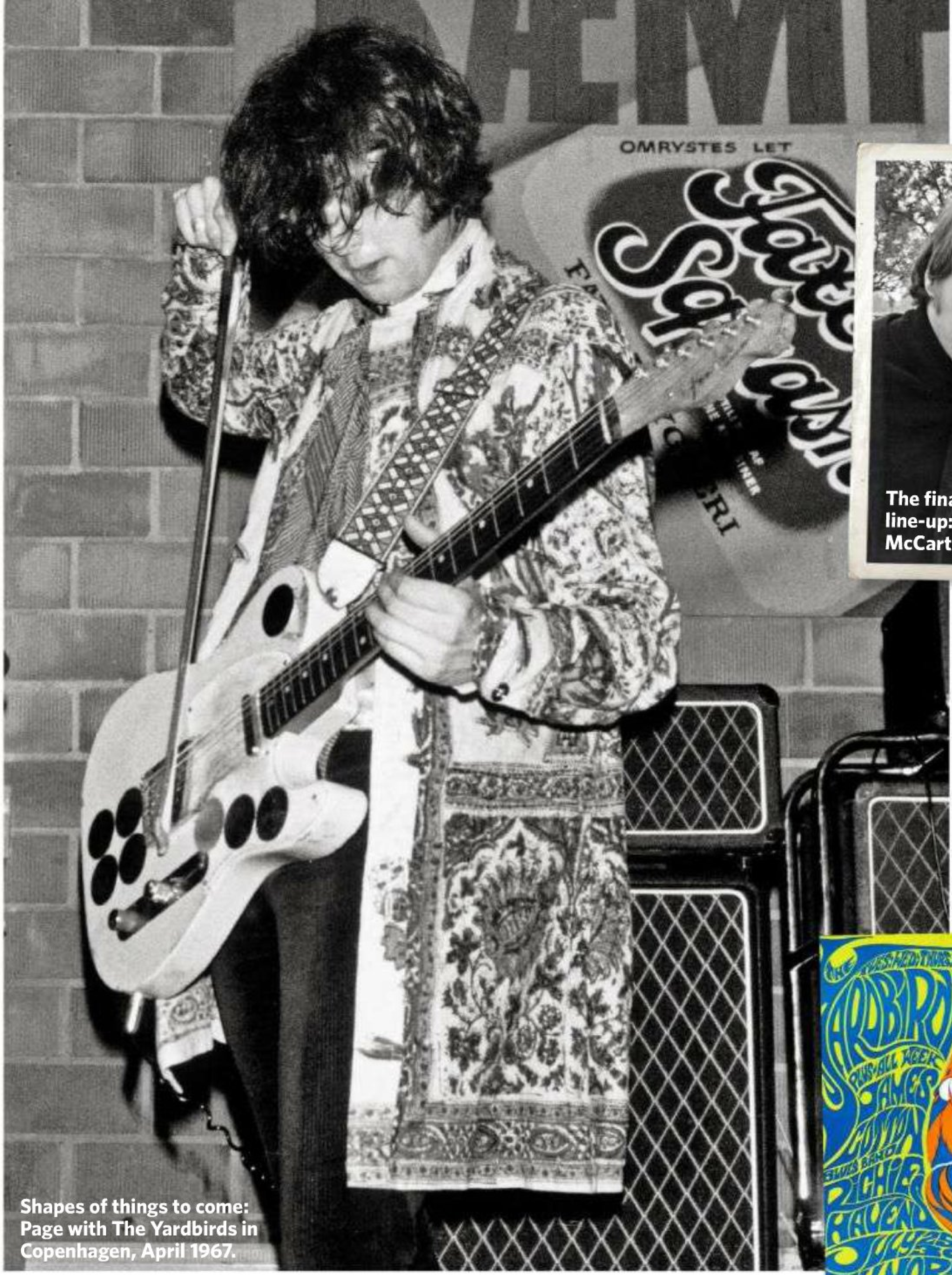

Shapes of things to come: Page with The Yardbirds in Copenhagen, April 1967.

The final Yardbirds line-up: (l-r) Dreja, McCarty, Page and Relf.

about it and looking for another singer, we just let it slip by. Then The Who began a tour, The Yardbirds began a tour and that was it."

The idea might have been gone for now, but it was not to be forgotten. Not by Page, anyway.

Back on tour in America as part of the Dick Clark Caravan Of Stars – sharing the bill with such luminaries as Sam The Sham & The Pharaohs, Brian Hyland and Gary Lewis & The Playboys – Jeff Beck finally broke down and left the band. Weeks of on-tour aggro – late-shows, tantrums, freak-outs – finally coalesced into what he later described as a full-on nervous breakdown.

"I don't know if you know what a nervous breakdown really is, but I had one," he told *Rolling Stone* in 1971. "I had fainted and fell down about three flights of stone stairs, couldn't even speak to the doctor, and after he gives me about three thousand prescriptions he tells me I'll be alright, I just have meningitis. And I thought: 'My mother told me meningitis was a bad disease…'"

The official announcement of Beck's departure – and of The Yardbirds continuing as a four-piece with just Page on guitar – came just a few weeks later. Meanwhile, the band ploughed on without a break through Christmas and New Year through dozens more US shows, followed by dates in Australia Singapore, New Zealand, France… and back to Britain, America… on and on.

They were still on tour in July 1967 when *Little Games,* their only album with Page, was released. Recorded on the fly in March and April that year, and with Page credited as co-songwriter of six of the album's seven original songs, it's impossible to listen to it today and see it as anything other than a pre-Zeppelin Led Zeppelin album.

The future was being written on tracks like *Smile On Me,* it's heavy gas blues steamrollering along, Page's scab-picking guitar break there to be reopened on *You Shook Me* on the first Zeppelin album. Similarly, the raging guitar intro to *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Sailor*, credited on *Little Games* to Page and McCarty (the latter recalls writing the track at Jimmy's Epsom home), would again be revisited: you can hear it reborn in the ringing symphonic guitars of the Zeppelin track *The Song Remains The Same* – part sonic overture, part hippie dream, layered to such extremes that it begins to resemble the sound of a sitar or tambura, Robert Plant's artificially accelerated vocals in such a high register they too begin to resemble the excitement of Indian reed and vocal music.

"Eric was a blues man. Jeff was a bloody genius, wasn't he? But I loved to play with Jimmy. He was full of energy."

Chris Dreja

Tinker also featured the sound of Page playing his guitar – a Vox 12-string in this case – with a violin bow. It was a technique he would also employ on another of *Litte Games*'s cornerstone tracks, *Glimpses*. This was the closest Page felt he really got to where he wanted to go after Beck left The Yardbirds. By the time the album came out, *Glimpses* was already a live show-stopper. Some saw Page sawing away at his Telecaster (unlike the Gibson Les Paul he would use more in Zeppelin) as a gimmick, but using a bow on the guitar was more than just a novelty for a musician of Page's stature.

On stage he would use homemade tapes of various sound effects, which he would play along with, improvising to the sound of the Staten Island Ferry, full of crunching noises and horns, random voices, poetry… He had wanted to have some Hitler speeches on the tapes too, but the others said that would be going too far. But Page was still just 22, and the concept of 'too far' was unknown to him.

On tour once again in America, however, the band were now beginning to play in newly opened underground venues like Fillmore East. Making the sky fall during *Glimpses* was where it was at, where it could be, where it should be going. Page even talked about using tape recorders that were triggered by light beams, with a go-go dancer doing her thing, making the lights flash and the music take off… and everyone would look at him as though he was mad.

The Yardbirds were now a long way away from the world of *For Your Love*. So much so that Keith Relf's own solo spot on the album, his gentle and wintery *Only The Black Rose* sounds solitary and out of place.

Then there was *White Summer*, an acoustic guitar instrumental in the exotic, modal style of Page's later Zeppelin showcase track *Black Mountain Side*, down to the percussive accompaniment of tablas, the Indian hand drums,

Continued on page 123

GETTY x2; POSTER: ALAMY

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The Wizard Of Oz

"Everything's workin' like it should – bigger, bolder than ever," says a larger-than-life, 50-year-old Zakk Wylde. But it's not long ago that the Ozzy sideman and Black Label Society mainman was telling a different story.

Words: **Joe Bosso**

Zakk Wylde is happy as hell to be 50, and he's especially thrilled at how some of his body parts are holding up. "My vagina is awesome!" he crows. "It's more powerful than it's ever been. You ought to see my labia lunges – that's a sight to behold. I'll tell you, my vagina can harness more power at 50 than it did when I was 27. This getting older thing isn't so bad at all."

He lets out a throaty, raucous chortle, which he does often. Taking a gulp of coffee, he sticks a pin in the notion that hitting the big 5-0 is diminishing his strengths in any way. "I'm doing great, bro. No Viagra for me. No blue pills. Everything's workin' like it should – bigger, bolder than ever. I've got no complaints."

Indeed, these days everything about Zakk Wylde appears super-sized. For years he's cultivated a larger-than-life image, and the advancement of time – and a serious commitment to weightlifting – has only increased his enormity. Style-wise, he's a cross between Thor and an extra on *Sons Of Anarchy*, all leather vests and clanking chains, and with his lip-obscuring moustache, a nearly two-foot-long beard and a Fabio-like mane of hair, he's not likely to blend into a crowd anytime soon.

He cut a dramatically different figure back in the day. In 1987, when he was first thrust into the spotlight as Jake E. Lee's hotshot guitar replacement in Ozzy Osbourne's band, he was a clean-shaven pretty boy, sporting the *de rigueur* poodle 'do popularised by pop-metal bands like Poison and Warrant. "Yeah, I had the poofy hair," Wylde recalls. "After a while, I didn't give a fuck about doing my hair. I don't think I bought a can of Aqua Net after 1988. Once Guns N' Roses hit, I had enough of that shit. I just rolled out of bed and it was like: 'Here I am – let's jam!'"

Wylde's tenure with Ozzy has been an on-again/off-again arrangement, and as of right now, it's on again: the guitarist, who rejoined him for a series of dates last year, will hit the road come May for the singer's two-year "farewell" tour. During his first break with Ozzy, which lasted from 1995 to 2001, Wylde formed his own band, Black Label Society. The group has been through roughly half a dozen iterations, and out of the current line-up (Dario Lorina on rhythm guitar and Jeff Fabb on drums), bassist John DeServio is the longest-standing member, having worked with the outfit briefly in 1999 and rejoining in 2005.

"There's never been any problems with any of the guys in the band," Wylde explains. "No fights or blow-outs. I just try to surround myself with great musicians and cool guys, and it's like: 'Okay, we're gonna make this record and we're gonna tour – can you do it?' There's no drama. I don't roll like that. Everybody I've ever played with is my brother."

"I don't know if age matters with songwriting. I never wrote about partying, I'm interested in life, religion and war."

Despite the number of players to pass through BLS's revolving doors, Wylde has established the band as a high-demand concert draw, and he hasn't been stingy when it comes to issuing records. This month, the group is set to release its 10th studio album, *Grimmest Hits*, a righteous set of roiling, doomsday metal and poignant, Southern rock-tinged ballads. Each song features a boatload of Wylde's prodigious six-string skills – there's enough gnarly licks and nimble fretboard runs to satisfy the shred set – but throughout the record the guitarist deepens his reach as a gutsy, soulful vocalist and a world-weary, introspective lyricist. Does he feel he's mellowing with age?

"I don't know if age matters when it comes to songwriting," he opines. "I mean, yeah, you get older and you have more things to write about – you've just seen more and you have more to draw from. Even when I was partying, I was never the type of guy to write about partying. That stuff just seemed goofy to me. It's more interesting to write about life and religion and war. There's inspiration everywhere. I might see a movie and go, 'Oh, that's a cool thing to write about.' I guess I just gravitate toward that kind of thing than, you know, silly shit.

"All the bands I grew up loving, they didn't write about ▷

JUSTIN REICH

Wylde at heart: Zakk today.

Gibson brothers: Slash and Zakk duel at Night Of 100 Guitars, London, 1994.

Hero: a youthful Wylde with Ozzy in 1987.

corny stuff," he continues. "Look at Zeppelin. It wasn't always *Whole Lotta Love*; sometimes it was *Stairway To Heaven*. They were going for something pretty heavy there. And Sabbath, what are they talking about in *Iron Man* and *War Pigs?* So I think your maturity level can grow even when you're rockin'. You can't just stay in the same place as you were when you're seventeen."

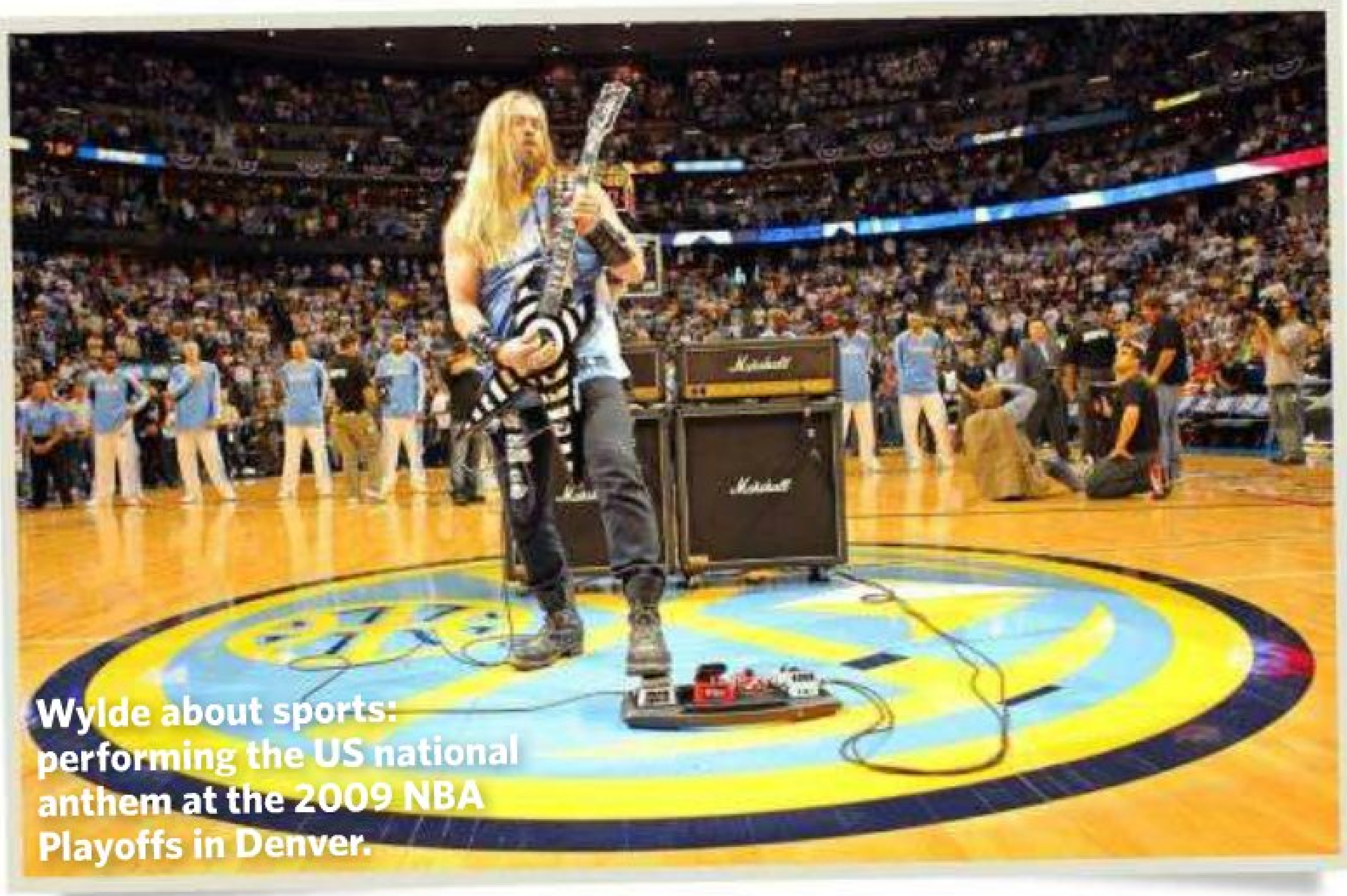
The release of any new record brings with it the chance to tour, and for Wylde, there's no place he'd rather be than on the road. "I don't have any problems with touring," he says. "I probably do three hundred shows a year, and I love it. I go batshit crazy when I'm not playing. I hear these guys, like, 'Oh, man, touring's such a drag,' and I'm like, 'Well, what the fuck did you get into this for?' If you're a musician, you go out and jam. Touring makes some guys insane, and I don't get that. It keeps me sane, bro."

During those brief spells when he's not on tour, Wylde leads a quiet life at his home in California with his wife, Barbaranne. They married in 1985, but the two New Jersey natives have been together since their teens. "We don't do anything crazy," Wylde says. "We just like to hang out and enjoy ourselves with the family." Two of their kids, Hayley Rae and Jesse, are in their 20s ("They're doing their own things"), so that leaves sons Hendrix, 15, and Sabbath Page, 5, at home. "Hendrix has his own friends, so I mostly hang out with the little guy now," Wylde says. "People might think it's boring, but I have a great time. I love lifting weights, and other than that I just play the guitar. I wake up, and it's practise, practise, practise. I feel like I'm learning something new every day."

It all could have turned out very differently. In August of 2009, at the age of 42, after decades of heavy drinking, Wylde was hospitalised with blood clots in both lungs and his left leg. The guitarist admits that he never considered himself an alcoholic – this despite a brief stay at the Promises rehab center at the behest of Ozzy's wife and manager, Sharon (Wylde jumped the facility's fence and headed for the nearest bar) – but the news from his attending physician was brutal and direct: stop drinking or die.

"I had a good run with the drinking but I drove it into the ground. If I'd kept on I would have brought down the curtain fast."

"At first I thought, 'Oh, I just gotta chill out on the drinking,'" Wylde recalls. "But the doc laid it out and said, 'Zakk, I'm looking at your pancreas and your kidneys – your enzyme counts are off the charts. If you keep drinking, you'll have a liver transplant before you're 45. And then forget about your pancreas – that's not too far behind. The guys who go through that either die on the table or they don't leave here. They just say goodbye to everybody, and that's that.'"


Wylde about sports: performing the US national anthem at the 2009 NBA Playoffs in Denver.

And that was that: Wylde made the decision to leave his hell-raising pub days behind him. "It was a no-brainer," he concludes. "I had a good run with the drinking, but I drove it into the ground. I could keep drinking and bring down the curtain fast, or I could have a long life and career. I could listen to Jimmy Page and Zeppelin and Sabbath and Frank Marino and Al Di Meola. I could hang out with my family and my dogs. All I had to do was stop drinking."

Even so, was he concerned that once on the road again the old temptations to drink would get the best of him? "I really didn't think about it," he claims. "I mean, sure, I liked to drink on the road. It was enjoyable. But it's almost like asking, 'Can you deal without a massage on the road?' A massage is great – I enjoy it a lot – but can I do shows without getting one? Of course I can. Same goes for drinking. It used to relax me, but I just had to find other ways to relax."

A little online porn on the road helps take the edge off. Wylde lets out an uproarious laugh when asked to choose between the works of legendary porn stars Rocco Siffredi and Nick Manning. "Let's face it, both of them are a win-win," he notes authoritatively. "If I had to choose, I'd probably go with Rocco. I discovered him first, and it's always satisfaction guaranteed. You're always gonna get a quality motion picture with Rocco. But Nick is amazing, too. Both guys are killin'. They're doing their thing for humanity and mankind, and they make the world a more relaxed place."

Sports also fill the gaps in Wylde's life – he's a lifelong fan of the New York Yankees and New York Giants, and he once hosted his own talk show, *Wylde On Sports*, on SiriusXM. Growing up in Jackson, New Jersey, he played little league baseball and scored a slot on his high school football team. He had tinkered around with the guitar aged eight, but when he started taking lessons from his football coach's son, LeRoy Wright, a light went on.

"That's when I got serious about the guitar, taking lessons from LeRoy [in high school]," he says. "He made me get good fast. This was all before YouTube. To physically see somebody playing all these songs right in front of me, I was completely hooked. LeRoy showed me how to play *Back In Black*, all these songs. He broke down the scales and showed me how to connect the dots. That just put me on the road to learning, and I couldn't stop. I practised ten hours a day, and it wasn't even work. LeRoy made it fun for me."

For the next few years, Wylde played keg parties and local clubs with bands such as Stonehenge and Zyris, but he admits that he didn't have much of

GETTY x2; PHOTOSHOT x1

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Gang of four: with Black Label Society.

Letting his hair down with BLS at Manchester Apollo in 2011.

a game plan. "I was just doing what I loved," he says. "I was gigging and playing, and that was it. I didn't think this guy behind the curtain was going to change everything, like in *The Wizard Of Oz*."

But that's more or less what happened: noted rock photographer Mark Weiss got a tape of Wylde's playing, which he passed to Ozzy and Sharon. An audition was arranged, and before he knew it he's got the coveted spot as Ozzy's ace guitar guy.

"People ask me did I feel the pressure. And the answer is 'no,'" Wylde says. "Being a Yankees fan, to me Randy Rhoads was Thurman Munson. He was the captain and then Jake E. Lee came in. So that was my mindset – I'm the new guy going into the Yankees. I wanted to do great. I wanted to succeed. I wanted to win the World Series, simple as that."

Wylde has always had an affinity for Southern rock ("My buddies and I listened to Skynyrd and the Allmans – crack open some beers and turn it up"), and by 1991 he started slipping some non-shred metal licks into Ozzy's music – most notably, there was his panoramic, cosmic country solo in *Mama, I'm Coming Home*. "Ozzy would bust my balls a little about that stuff, but if it fit the song, he was cool," Wylde claims. While on his tour bus, the guitarist found himself chilling out to the Eagles, and soon got into the music of Sam Cooke and Percy Sledge. "After a while, I just wanted to play some different stuff. But let's be honest, you can't make Ozzy sound like the Eagles, so I thought: 'Okay, let's see what I can do on my own.'"

The time seemed to be right in 1992, when Ozzy announced his retirement following the No More Tears Tour. Wylde formed a band called Pride & Glory, signed a big-money deal with Geffen and released a self-titled album in 1994. The record was a faithful love letter to the music the guitarist had recently absorbed, but while it received positive notices, it failed to connect with listeners. A year later, Ozzy called off his retirement, and Wylde was back for the album *Ozzmosis*.

Wylde downplays the notion that he and Ozzy butted heads during the album's recording, but upon its release he was spending less time with "the boss" in favour of jamming infrequently with Guns N' Roses, with the idea that he might join Slash to form a mega, twin-lead guitar duo. "They were trying to figure out what they wanted to do, and it was taking a while," Wylde recalls. "Finally, Oz said, 'Hey, Zakk, I gotta know what you're doing.' It came down to the last minute 'cos Oz was going to go on tour, so that's when he got Joe Holmes in. I was cool with that. I had all these songs lying around, so I put them out as *Book Of Shadows*, and right after that Black Label Society was born."

To those on the outside, the relationship between Wylde and Ozzy is something of a head-scratcher. The guitarist hooked back up with the singer in 2001 for a series of tours and albums while he continued to lead BLS. The two appeared to reach a sort of peaceful accord, but in 2009 Ozzy made the surprising announcement that he had parted ways with Wylde and hired Greek guitarist Gus G from Firewind as his replacement.

Differing accounts for his decision made the news: the singer had reached his breaking point with Wylde's drinking; he claimed that the guitarist was making his music too much like Black Label Society. Wylde, who was at first blindsided by his termination and expressed outrage in a radio interview ("Call me, man. It's like, dude, you don't wanna play with me anymore? Fine. Play with whoever the hell you wanna play with"), now stresses that the situation was overblown in the press.

"Ozzy introduced me to the world. I'll always be in debt to him for giving me the incredble life I have."

"I had Black Label going, and I just wanted to jam with other people," he says. "And Oz was like, 'Zakk, look, I don't wanna be the lead singer of Black Label Society.' Totally understandable, I mean if Randy Rhoads was still jamming with Quiet Riot and he was going back to Oz, then Oz would've said, 'I'm sounding like Quiet Riot.' I get it. So Oz went out and played with Gus. That's how it all rolls."

And so it would seem that Wylde's decision to rejoin Ozzy is just par for the course. "Any time the boss needs me, I'm there," he says. Despite their storied history of starts and stops, Wylde remains fiercely loyal to the man who lifted him from obscurity and propelled him into the pantheon of guitar greats. "Everything I have is because of Ozzy," he asserts. "Whether it's the Black Label family and all the touring I do, playing Experience Hendrix [which he did in 2017 alongside Buddy Guy and Eric Johnson] and the whole thing, it's all because Ozzy introduced me to the world. I'll always be in debt to Oz and mom for giving me the incredible life I have."

Black Label Society's current tour wraps in May, and after that Wylde might have to put the band on ice for a while as he traverses the globe with Ozzy. Billing any tour as a "farewell" is a sure-fire way to sell tickets, and Wylde, perhaps owning up to Ozzy's Sinatra-like penchant for false retirements, is already taking the matter with a pinch of salt. "We'll play till 2020, and then we'll all make some horrendously bad investments," he says with a laugh. "Then you'll see us again on the 'We Made Some Horrendously Bad Investments Tour.' That'll give us a reason to come back. Or it'll be the 'We Developed a Bad Gambling Problem Tour.' You never know, bro."

Grimmest Hits is out on January 19 via Spinefarm Records. Black Label Society's UK dates are on April 5, 7 and 8.

MAIN: ALAMY; INSET: JUSTIN REICH/PRESS

NEVER SURRENDER

With grit, determination, great songs and classic albums rather than flash and style over substance, in the 80s **Saxon** rose to become the flag-carrying kings of heavy metal.

Words: **Dave Everley**

PHOTOSHOT

Biff Byford is on top of the world. More specifically, on top of a piano, peering out of a window and down at a line of dozens of people below him.

He and his bandmates in Saxon are holed up in a room on the second floor of the Whiskey A Go Go, the fabled Sunset Strip club that has been the launch pad for some of LA's greatest rock bands. Tonight, March 27, 1982, it's host to five Yorkshiremen with fire in their loins and Castrol GTX running through their veins.

Pan an imaginary camera around the room and you'll see a scene that defines the coming decade. Over there is Saxon's old touring buddy Ozzy Osbourne and his girlfriend Sharon Arden. Ozzy is still distraught over the death of his guitarist Randy Rhoads a couple of weeks earlier. He's dealing with it by getting as fucked up as possible all the time. Today he's barely coherent.

The camera swings around as the door bursts open and four hotshots with leather jackets, eye make-up and candyfloss hair tumble in. This is Mötley Crüe, the buzziest band in LA right now. They're huge Saxon fans – especially bassist Nikki Sixx – and they're here to meet their heroes.

Follow that same camera down the stairs and into the venue's main room. On stage, four teenage headbangers are snarling their way through a song that sounds like a feral animal that's been starved for weeks then let loose. They've been chosen by Saxon themselves to open both of today's two shows. Their name is Metallica. God alone knows what will become of them.

For the past two years, Saxon's career has swung faster and faster in one direction: upwards. Their last three albums – *Wheels Of Steel, Strong Arm Of The Law* and *Denim And Leather*, machine-gunned out in the space of 18 months – have been stone-cold instant classics. Back home in Britain they're standard bearers for a new grass-roots rock movement, unlikely pop stars, bona fide working-class heroes. Here in LA they're heavy metal crusaders, emissaries from another place bringing new sounds and new velocities that will electrify what's happening in a town constantly looking for its next fix of excitement.

"We were big in Britain, no argument," Biff says. "Probably the biggest of our generation of metal bands at the time. We'd done it through hard graft and killer songs; none of that trendy image rubbish."

Los Angeles falls for Saxon, but in the end America never truly does. Maybe their music is too driven, too macho, not mellow enough. Maybe their Yorkshireness is too undiluted for Boise, Idaho and Hell, Minnesota. Maybe – with their moustaches and mix'n'match hairlines – they're just not pretty enough.

Saxon don't need America to rubber-stamp their greatness. Thanks to that holy triptych of albums they released at the dawn of the 1980s their immortality is enshrined. Today history might have relegated them to a distant fourth behind Iron Maiden, Def Leppard and Motörhead, but Saxon did as much to forge heavy metal's glorious future as any of those bands.

"That band was so fucking cool," former Mötley Crüe bassist Nikki Sixx says today. "They had all of the elements of the great British heavy metal bands – the Deep Purples and Black Sabbaths – but they also had the rawness of AC/DC and punk. They should never have been playing at the Whiskey, they should have been headlining arenas."

> **"The late seventies were a wasteland. Strikes, poverty, the edge of anarchy. Saxon came out of that."**
>
> **Biff Byford**

The story of Saxon isn't a glamorous one. Not compared to that of Led Zeppelin or Ozzy or Mötley Crüe, anyway. You don't come to them for sordid tales of sex, drugs and death by gardening accident. (Well, maybe you do for sex. "We did alright on that front, thank you very much," says Byford.)

Saxon's tale is all about grit and determination. It's caked in sweat, and reeks of exhaust fumes and the back rooms of Working Men's Clubs. But it's also a tale of heroic escape – from the council estates they lived on, from the pits and factories they worked in. It's no coincidence that many of Saxon's greatest songs – *Motorcycle Man, Wheels Of Steel, Midnight Rider* – celebrated the freedom of the open road.

"The late seventies were a wasteland," says Byford. "Strikes, poverty, the edge of anarchy. It was a bad period. Saxon came out of that."

Byford turns 67 this month, but he still stands as tall and rigid as an oak. The mane of hair is whiter than it is blond these days. He has no time for ➢

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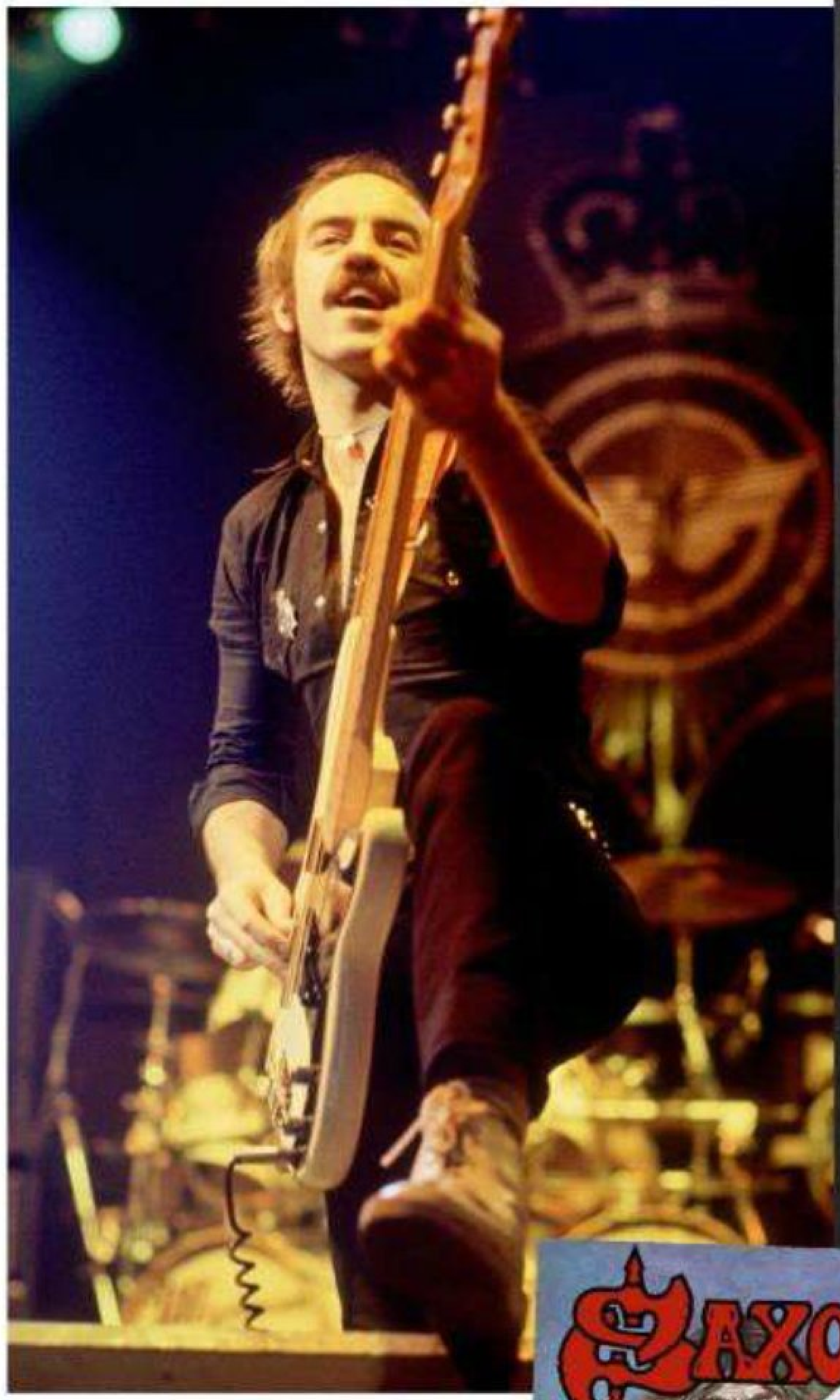

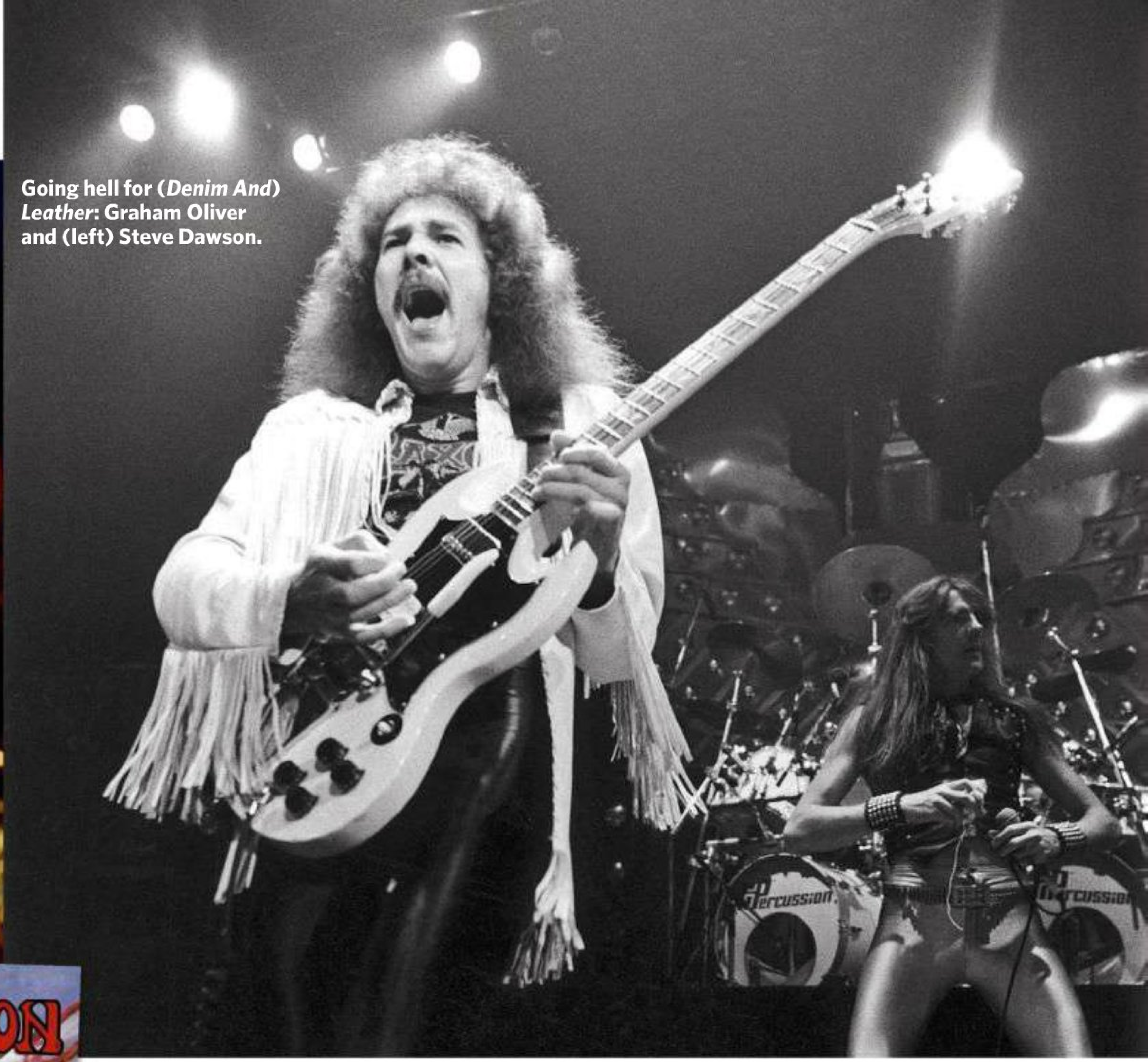

Going hell for (*Denim And*) *Leather*: Graham Oliver and (left) Steve Dawson.

deep insights or touchy-feely confessionals. Impertinent or plain stupid questions are greeted with an impatient arch of the eyebrow. You can take the boy out of Yorkshire, but you can't take Yorkshire out of the boy.

The members of Saxon lived within 10 or 15 miles of each other in the Barnsley-Sheffield-Doncaster triangle when they started out in 1976, when they still traded under the deliberately provocative name Son Of A Bitch. All five – Byford, guitarists Graham Oliver and Paul Quinn, bassist Steve Dawson and drummer Pete Gill – had plenty of miles on the clock in other bands, but this one was different.

"We had all these plans to take over the world," says original bassist Dawson. "We were five lads together all the time. There was no weak link. No one were saying: 'I can't play a gig this weekend because me missus won't let me' and all that malarkey."

"We all had various jobs at different times, but we got the sack because we wouldn't turn in for work or we'd get there late," says Oliver. "You'd run out of petrol on the way back from Hull and you'd have to wait until the next morning to get home."

For anyone listening to Saxon's music at the time, Oliver and Dawson were as important to the Saxon sound as Byford's colliery siren voice. The former was half of one of the era's great guitar teams, up there with Gorham and Robertson or Tipton and Downing. Dawson was Saxon's engine room, a bare-chested dynamo wearing a denim jacket and moustache (something actor Harry Shearer borrowed a few years later when he created Spinal Tap bassist Derek Smalls).

In their early years, Son Of A Bitch/Saxon burned though gallons of petrol gigging up and down the country, riling venue owners by refusing to play covers of the day's pop songs. They drove a battered American car, an Oldsmobile Cutlass, imported by a friend of theirs, partly because it looked cool and partly because it had a bench front seat and could fit everyone in comfortably. They played anywhere that would have them, with anyone who would have them: the Ian Gillan Band, Heavy Metal Kids, Woody Woodmansey's U-Boat, Nutz. At one point they opened for The Clash. Byford: "It was only one gig, in a place called Belle Vue in Manchester. I only remember it cos it was a really odd bill. People were spitting at us. That was showing their appreciation, so we obviously went down well. We did a festival with Joe Strummer years later and he fucking remembered it. I was really impressed. We were jamming *747* with an acoustic with him."

> **"There was blood all over. One guy at the front shouting: 'This is great, it's just like punk!'"**
>
> **Graham Oliver**

Saxon didn't see punk as an obstacle so much as an inspiration. They shared DNA: speed, rawness, a fuck-you attitude. Biff Byford was a street rat just like Johnny Rotten, only those streets happened to be in Barnsley rather than North London.

"One of our first appearances at the Marquee, Pete Gill accidentally knocked over his drum kit and it cut my hand," says Oliver. "There was blood all over. I remember one guy at the front shouting, 'This is great, it's just like punk!'"

Like the punks, Saxon looked as if they'd stepped out of their own audience and on to the stage. They sounded like it too. Not for them the last-days-of-empire excess of mid-70s Zeppelin or the musical showboating of the prog crowd. The song titles said it all: *Backs To the Wall, Still Fit To Boogie, Stallions Of The Highway*…

A deal with Queen's former managers, Trident, got them a wage of £30 a week, which they spent on leather jackets, jeans and petrol. French disco label Carrere signed them for £50,000. For five working-class guys it was like winning the Lottery.

"They got lucky, didn't they?" Byford says bluntly. "They found a stinking rock band and we sold a lot of records for them. They were in the right place at the right time with the right money."

Things got off to a rocky start, however, with Carrere hating the original mix of Saxon's self-titled debut album.

"We'd never been in a studio," says Oliver. "We'd got these people who worked with Queen watching over our shoulder, and they'd got an idea of how they wanted us to sound. It weren't us. It were too slick."

The band went back to the rawer demos they'd recorded a few months earlier and gave them a bit of spit and polish. The finished album was a patchwork of styles – bell-bottomed hard rock, tough-as-leather heavy metal, a shot of the blues, a whiff of psychedelia – but at least it was pointing in the right direction.

The public voted with their wallets – which remained in their pockets, unopened. Trident were even less impressed and dropped the band, putting them back on the dole. But Saxon were made of strong stuff. As Biff sang prophetically on *Backs To The Wall*: '*My hopes shot down, my backs to the wall/But I've got my pride, they can't take it all.*'

ROSS HALFIN x2

There's a great film to be made about the late-70s rock scene. Or maybe it's a sitcom. Either way, it's set entirely in an imaginary service station on the M1 in the early hours of the morning sometime in 1979. Saxon stride purposefully past shuttered Wimpy Bars and unplugged Space Invaders machines, nodding to members of Iron Maiden, Def Leppard and Angel Witch as they slurp cold tea in an attempt to keep themselves awake on their journey to or from their latest gig in some godforsaken part of the country.

Saxon played with most of those bands. At the end of 1979 they headlined a prestigious gig at London's Music Machine, supported by Iron Maiden. Within 12 months this nascent scene would be christened the New Wave Of British Heavy Metal. "Were there rivalries? No," says Byford. "We didn't give a shit. We just used to go on and try and destroy everything."

The one band everyone looked up to was Motörhead. Lemmy was a veteran of the psychedelic wars, and one of the few longhairs accepted by the punks. Saxon got the nod to open for them on their *Bomber* tour in November 1979. These were the biggest venues they'd ever played: Odeons and Apollos, City Halls and Winter Gardens. Twenty-nine dates in total. They don't tour 'em like that any more.

"We met Motörhead for the first time outside their office and they were absolutely fucking crazy," says Biff. "You couldn't pick Lemmy as the standout character back then. All three of them had their own thing going. Phil was the spiv. He'd sell you a car. Then you've got 'Fast' Eddie, who was all over the place. Lemmy was the rock holding it together."

The two bands shared a bus. Saxon looked on with a mix of bemusement, amusement and horror as Phil and Eddie conjured fist-fights with each other out of nowhere, while Lemmy read a book in the middle of it. Saxon weren't a drug band – they weren't even a big drinking band, despite appearances – but Motörhead did their best to persuade them otherwise.

"We had everything that's illegal within the first half an hour of being on the bus with them," says Dawson. "Which made most of us ill. If you haven't had that stuff before it tends to have an adverse effect."

"Lemmy would make us have vodka and orange," says Oliver. "He said it was breakfast, because it had orange in it."

The tour was the break Saxon needed. Motörhead had done *Top Of The Pops*, QED they were a Big Deal. Audiences who bought tickets for the main draw got there to see the opening act. Saxon were unofficially adopted by the audiences as Motörhead's kid brother band. It wouldn't be long before they were a Big Deal themselves.

You'll have to search hard to find a better year for heavy metal than 1980. It's all there on the calendar: Def Leppard's *On Through The Night* (March), Black Sabbath's *Heaven And Hell* (April), Judas Priest's *British Steel* (ditto), *Iron Maiden* by Iron Maiden (ditto), Ozzy's *Blizzard Of Ozz* (September), Motörhead's *Ace Of Spades* (November). Throw the net wider and you get Van Halen, Rush, Whitesnake…

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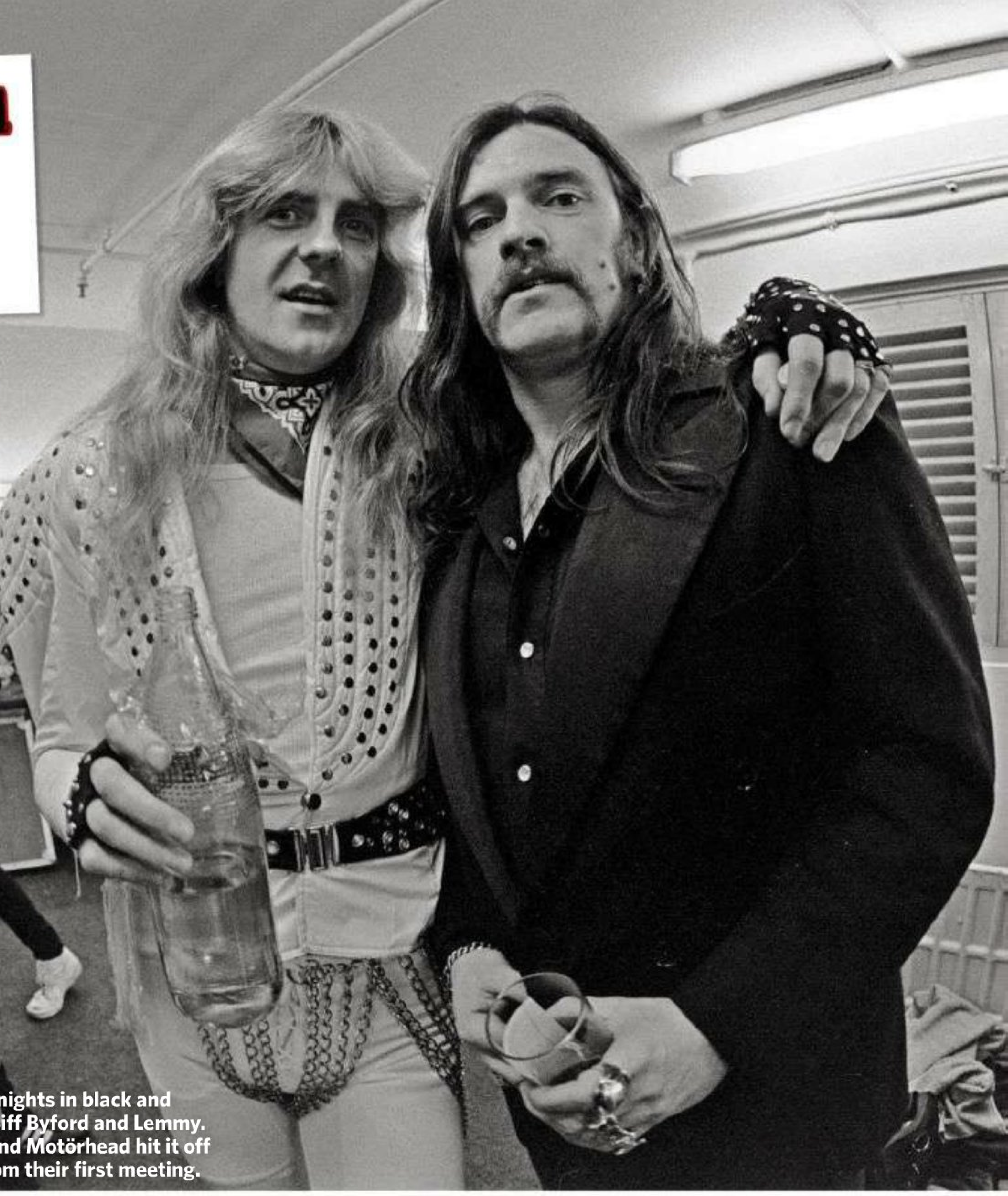
Metal knights in black and white: Biff Byford and Lemmy. Saxon and Motörhead hit it off right from their first meeting.

Saxon didn't release a classic album in 1980. They released two. The first, *Wheels Of Steel*, remains their magnum opus. Unless you count the one that came just four months after it, *Strong Arm Of The Law*. Or the one that followed a full year later, *Denim And Leather*. That trio of records didn't just turn Saxon into a figurehead for rock's new generation, they also distilled the essence of heavy metal into a draught that bands still drink from today.

Not that Saxon were thinking such things when they were sitting on top of a Welsh mountain writing *Wheels Of Steel*. They'd rented an old farmhouse, and spent a few weeks regretting it. Nothing in the way of entertainment, no pubs and certainly no clubs. Their nearest neighbours are the inhabitants of a teepee village set up by someone who used to be in Hawkwind.

> **"Lemmy would make us have vodka and orange. He said it was breakfast, because it had orange in it."**
>
> **Graham Oliver**

"It was bloody freezing, there was no heating, you'd open the drawers in the kitchen and they'd be full of mouse shit," says Oliver. "The worst place in the world. But we were there to get a job done."

Getting the job done is what Saxon did best. They already had a half an album of songs stockpiled from before the Motörhead tour. It didn't take long to finish the rest.

"We did it as one," says Oliver. "There weren't one person doing everything. I'd bring in a riff, then Paul would say: 'What about this for a chorus?' Biff would say let's write it about this. Everybody was throwing ideas in."

They came down the mountain a month later like five Moseses in grubby Levi's, clutching their own stone tablet and proclaiming their own set of commandments: thou shalt ride fast motorbikes (*Motorcycle Man*); thou shall drive fast cars (*Wheels Of Steel*, *Freeway Mad*); thou shall not take shit from anyone (*Street Fighting Gang*).

Wheels Of Steel roared into the Top 5 in May 1980, with the title track, released as a single a month earlier, having gatecrashed the Top 20.

"We did *Top Of The Pops* with no audience, just in case," says Byford. "If it went Top 30 the next week, they'd put it on. Just standing in a lonely studio, nobody there. Watch it on YouTube – we're petrified, you can see that. It was fucking TV, the first time we'd done it."

Audience or not, appearing on *Top Of The Pops* had its up sides. Coming across the show's resident female dance troupe, Pan's People, for one. "We met them up on the roof," says Byford. "There's a photograph floating around of it. We went out with a couple of them, partying. That's all I'm saying."

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"I asked 15,000 people for a fight."

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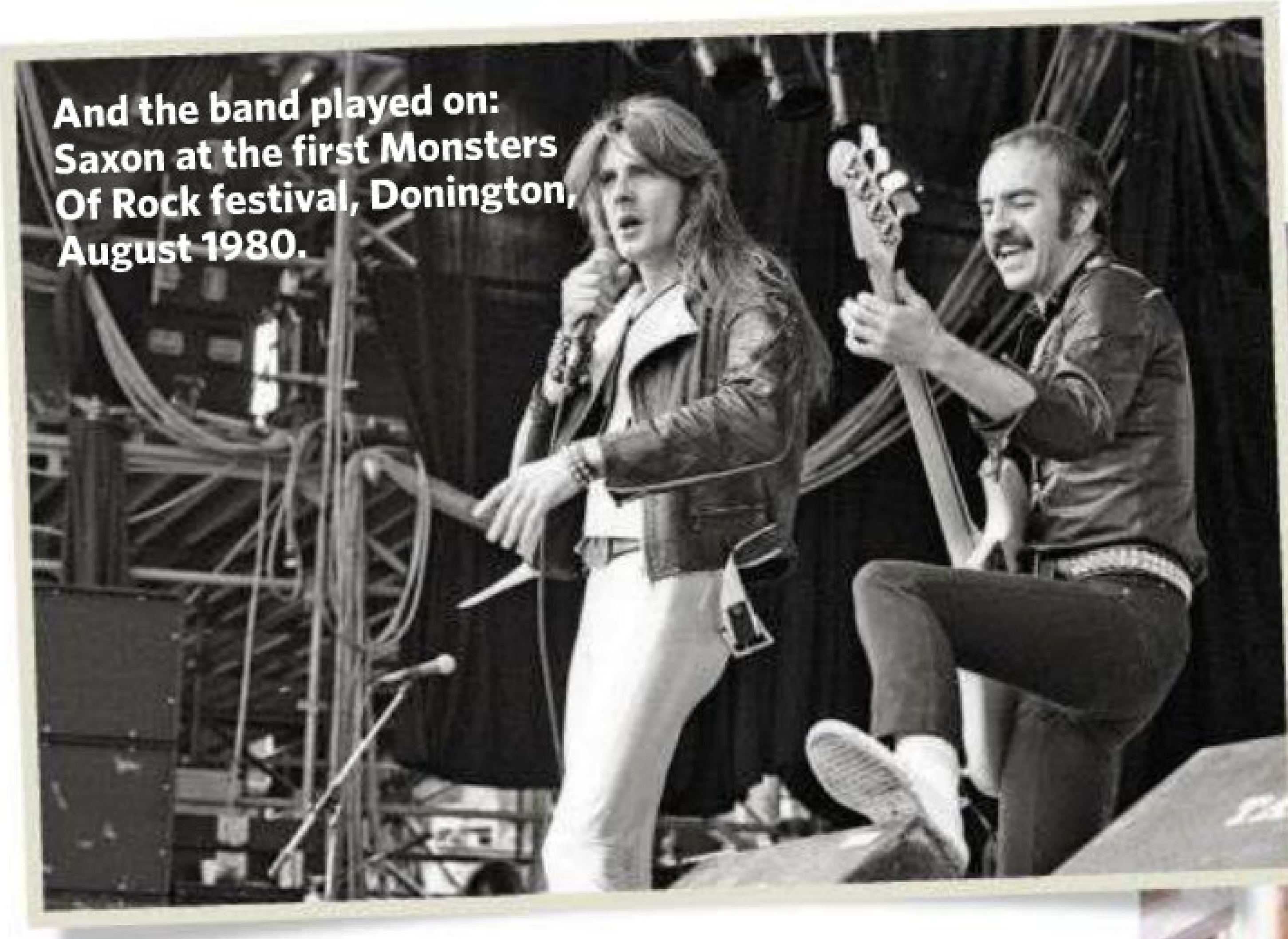
And the band played on: Saxon at the first Monsters Of Rock festival, Donington, August 1980.

Soaking up the sun backstage at Donington in 1980: (l-r) Graham Oliver, Paul Quinn, Pete Gill, Biff Byford, Steve Dawson.

Saxon's second great album of 1980 came out three months, three weeks and six days after their first. These days it would take a band that long to find the USB socket for their laptop in the studio.

"We were a little bit pressured into it," says Byford. "I think it took the record company and management by surprise. They thought we were a bit of a flash in the pan: 'There's no way these guys are going to do this again. Let's get them back in to write another before everybody forgets them.'"

Saxon, being Saxon, weren't about to let anyone forget them. Continuing their tour of Britain's farmhouses, this time around they pitched up in one near Diss in Norfolk. There they worked up new songs to add to the ones they had left over from *Wheels Of Steel*.

The result was *Strong Arm Of The Law*, an album that Graham Oliver calls *"Wheels Of Steel 2."* He's not wrong, although that's the highest praise possible – *Strong Arm* was just as stubborn and truculent and anthemic as its predecessor. Its finest songs – the proto-thrash rampage of *Heavy Metal Thunder*, the jet-plane love letter *20,000 Ft*, the JFK-inspired *Dallas 1pm* – tapped into the eternal Saxon themes of speed, rebellion and freedom (even *Sixth Form Girls*, belying its creepy-uncle title, was a celebration of teenage life in northern factory towns). The title track brought all those strands together: the exhilaration of playing a gig, the long motorway journey home, the inevitable run-in with the police, the ultimate triumph of Saxon over the establishment. Like all of their great songs, this was no outlaw fantasy – it was real life.

"That happened," says Byford. "It was on London Bridge. Or maybe it was Tower Bridge. We were in our big American car, and because we were long-haired fucking yobs the police obviously thought we took drugs. They stripped the car, pulled the bloody seats out. They tried the old: 'We just found this…' (holds up imaginary packet of drugs) 'Well it's not fucking ours!' We didn't have anything. 'The only speed we use is the car.' That's the line in the song."

Strong Arm Of The Law followed *Wheels Of Steel* into the upper echelons of the charts. A month earlier, Saxon had appeared at the first Monsters Of Rock festival at Donington Park. Their triumphant early-afternoon set sealed their legend as working-class boys done good.

"That was the first time we walked on stage after the huge album sales of *Wheels Of Steel*," says Byford. "I suppose we were the underdogs. Everybody wanted us to win. Especially us."

Saxon played fast and proud. Listen to recordings of the show – no matter how rough – and you hear a band firing on all engines, oblivious to external distractions. Playing Donington would inspire one of their greatest songs, the immortal *And The Bands Played On*, which would eventually appear on *Denim And Leather*.

On the other side of the album's release, Saxon made their first visit to the US, to support Rush. They weren't quite innocents abroad – there's nothing innocent about any band that toured with Motörhead – but there will was still an epic cultural disconnect.

"There were certain people in America who just called us faggots cos we had long hair and wore leather jackets and tight trousers," says Dawson. "It had a different meaning over there. Especially down south. We'd pull into a truck stop and walk into the toilets. There'd be these guys with Stetsons, and guns in their holsters, they didn't know what to think. They could couldn't take it in. 'What's with these guys walking around looking like women?'"

Saxon didn't get shot by rednecks or cowboys. Nor did they make any concessions to Rush's prog-loving audience.

"We hit the stage like we did at every show: 'You're gonna fucking like us,'" says Biff. "The sheer bombasticness of what was coming off the stage, the running about, just generally going crazy, they loved it."

> **"We had plans to take over the world. We were five lads together. There was no weak link."**
> **Steve Dawson**

There was a year and one month between *Strong Arm Of The Law* and *Denim And Leather*. A blink of an eye for most bands, an eternity by Saxon's standards.

They certainly weren't idle. Between the winter of 1980 and the summer of 1981 they toured constantly. They played across Britain and Europe and flew to Japan, which was as alien and brilliant as they expected. They made more appearances on *Top Of The Pops*, now in front of an audience. In the battle of band versus treadmill, Saxon were still winning.

Tired of freezing farmhouses, they headed to glamorous Geneva in Switzerland to record *Denim And Leather*. Which brought its own problems for five frugal Northerners. "I remember it being seven quid for a bowl of cornflakes for breakfast at the hotel," says Oliver. "I went: ''Ow much?!' A true Yorkshireman's war cry."

Breakfast might have nearly bankrupted them, but creatively Saxon were in the black. *Denim And Leather* polished the rough edges of its two illustrious predecessors without losing their blunt energy. Its opening track was Saxon in excelsis. In another band's hands a song called *Princess Of The Night* would have revolved around an alluring femme fatale, or maybe a prostitute. In Saxon's hands it was a love letter to steam train, a song whose magnificent velocity – *'Ninety tons of thunder steaming through the night'* – was tinged with a hint of sweet nostalgia. *'If I ever had my way, I'd bring the princess back one day,'* Byford hollers, crying out for a lost love.

"It was something we were interested in," says Dawson, not unreasonably. "Being a train spotter is a bit nerdy, but if you like it it doesn't matter what anybody else thinks. We thought: 'We're a rock band, we like steam engines, we've got a great riff.' So we just sat down and wrote it."

Princess Of The Night slotted neatly into the small but growing micro-genre of Saxon Songs About Boys' Things – bikes, cars, planes, and now trains.

"We were accused of being gay by the biggest metal magazine in Germany because we appealed to boys more than girls," says Oliver. "I think it was wishful thinking on their part. They wanted to live like we were living."

Princess Of The Night isn't the only great 1980s heavy metal anthem on *Denim And Leather*. There's also *And The Bands Played On*, inspired by that Donington appearance a year earlier; *Never Surrender*, a call-to-arms by a band who can still remember schlepping around the country in a battered van; *Fire In The Sky*, about a nuclear attack on Sheffield that predated terrifying 80s TV film *Threads* by three years. Best of all was the immortal title track. Based on a relentless Graham Oliver riff, it was the ultimate celebration of this ⊳

MAIN: RAY PALMER ARCHIVE/ICONICPIX; INSET: GEORGE BODNAR ARCHIVE/ICONICPIX

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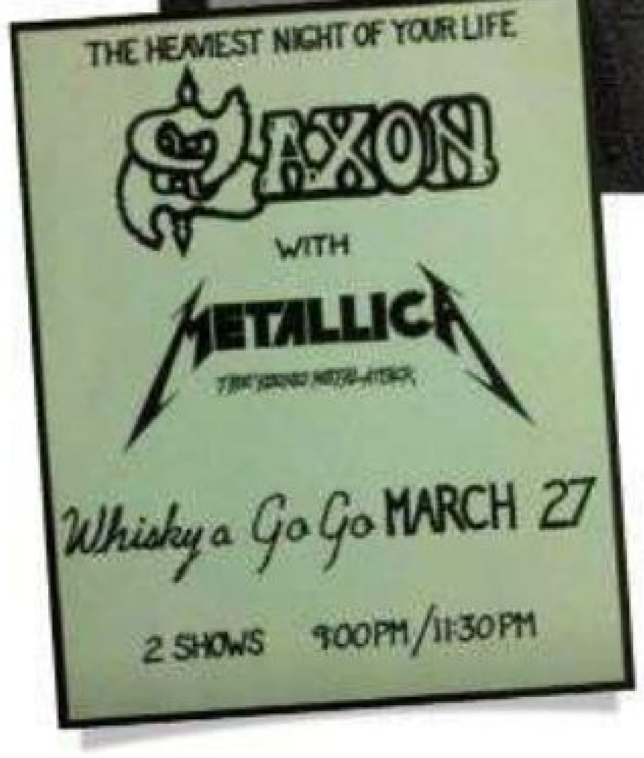
Big time here we come: backstage at Hammersmith Odeon, November 1979.



new strain of heavy metal culture. Where *were* you in 1979 when the dam began to burst, anyway?

Saxon were so big at that point that their support act in mainland Europe was Ozzy Osbourne. At least that was the plan. Ozzy managed three dates before vanishing minutes before he was due on stage at a gig in Germany.

"It was about quarter past seven, and his band were sound-checking in Germany," Graham Oliver remembers. "The tour manager came on to the stage and said: 'Right, lads, get your stuff off stage quick, you can't play – Ozzy and Sharon are in London.' That was the first anybody knew about it, fifteen minutes before the doors opened. What happened? I still don't know."

They travelled to America, where the bill was flipped and Ozzy headlined (and managed to stay the course this time). Oliver remembers swapping guitars with Randy Rhoads for backstage jams, and meeting Jimi Hendrix's dad in Seattle."I lived in a council house in South Yorkshire," Oliver says. "Never in my wildest dreams did I think I'd be sat in Jimi Henrix's dad's house, with his grandmother, who was a hundred and one, talking about Hendrix. It was incredible."

In early 1982 they embarked on another US tour, which took in four manic shows of their own over two days at the Whiskey A Go Go in Los Angeles. Graham Oliver and Steve Dawson hand-picked the support bands, choosing them from a pile of tapes accumulated in the back of the tour bus. One of the bands they went for was a gang of rising Californian hotshots named Ratt. The other was Metallica. "It was the quality of the demo and the tunes that stood out," says Oliver. "The others were rubbish."

Saxon didn't know Metallica from Adam, and neglected to watch them when they played their set. They were too busy entertaining admirers in their dressing room, Ozzy and Mötley Crüe among them.

"As soon as they came in, they immediately went into these poses," Dawson says of the Mötley Crüe guys. "It were like they were our best mates even though we'd never met. It was very bizarre. Very LA."

That surreal introduction didn't prevent the two bands becoming fast friends. When Mötley Crüe broke through a year later, they invited Saxon to support them. But America proved resistant to the British band, although that wasn't through lack of effort on their part.

> **"Were there rivalries? No. We didn't give a shit. We just used to go on and try and destroy everything."**
>
> **Biff Byford**

They could do nothing but watch as their old mates Iron Maiden raced past them.

"The biggest thing that went against us as far as America goes was that we didn't have a major label behind us," says Dawson. "That and the fact that things never seemed to go our way. We did have a big following – we could headline shows on the West Coast and in Texas, but it didn't really translate across the country. But I'm not complaining. We did alright out of it."

The last end-to-end classic Saxon record of the 1980s wasn't a studio album but 1982's *The Eagle Has Landed*. Like every great live album, it served as a greatest hits and a record of their imperial phase. Their career never fell off a cliff – it still hasn't all these years later – but an almost imperceptible commercial decline had set in. Subsequent studio albums swung between the near-classic – 1983's *Power And The Glory*, 1986's *Rock The Nation* – and the ropey, most notably 1988's ill-advisedly slick, trend-chasing *Destiny*.

No one can pinpoint where things started to go awry. Perhaps it was the acrimonious departure of Pete Gill just after they finished recording *Denim And Leather*. "He was a wild man of the drums," Graham Oliver says ruefully. "It was a blow for me and a blow for the fans."

Steve Dawson was forced out in 1986, taking some of Saxon's original spirit with him. Oliver followed a decade later, leaving Biff Byford and Paul Quinn as the only remaining members of that original Gang Of Five.

Byford isn't one to look back, but he knows the sound of those three classic albums his band made nearly 40 years ago still resonates today. "Am I proud of them? Of course I am," he says, eyebrow shooting up impatiently.

Oliver and Dawson – who reunited in the late 90s and currently trade as Oliver/Dawson's Saxon – naturally agree. "You could say they might have sounded better, you might say we could have done this or that better, but at the time it was the best it possibly could be," says Dawson. "We had an effect on what were happening at the time," adds Oliver. "Just ask Metallica or Mötley Crüe."

***Decade Of The Eagle* is out now via BMG Records. Saxon's new album *Thunderbolt* is released in February.**

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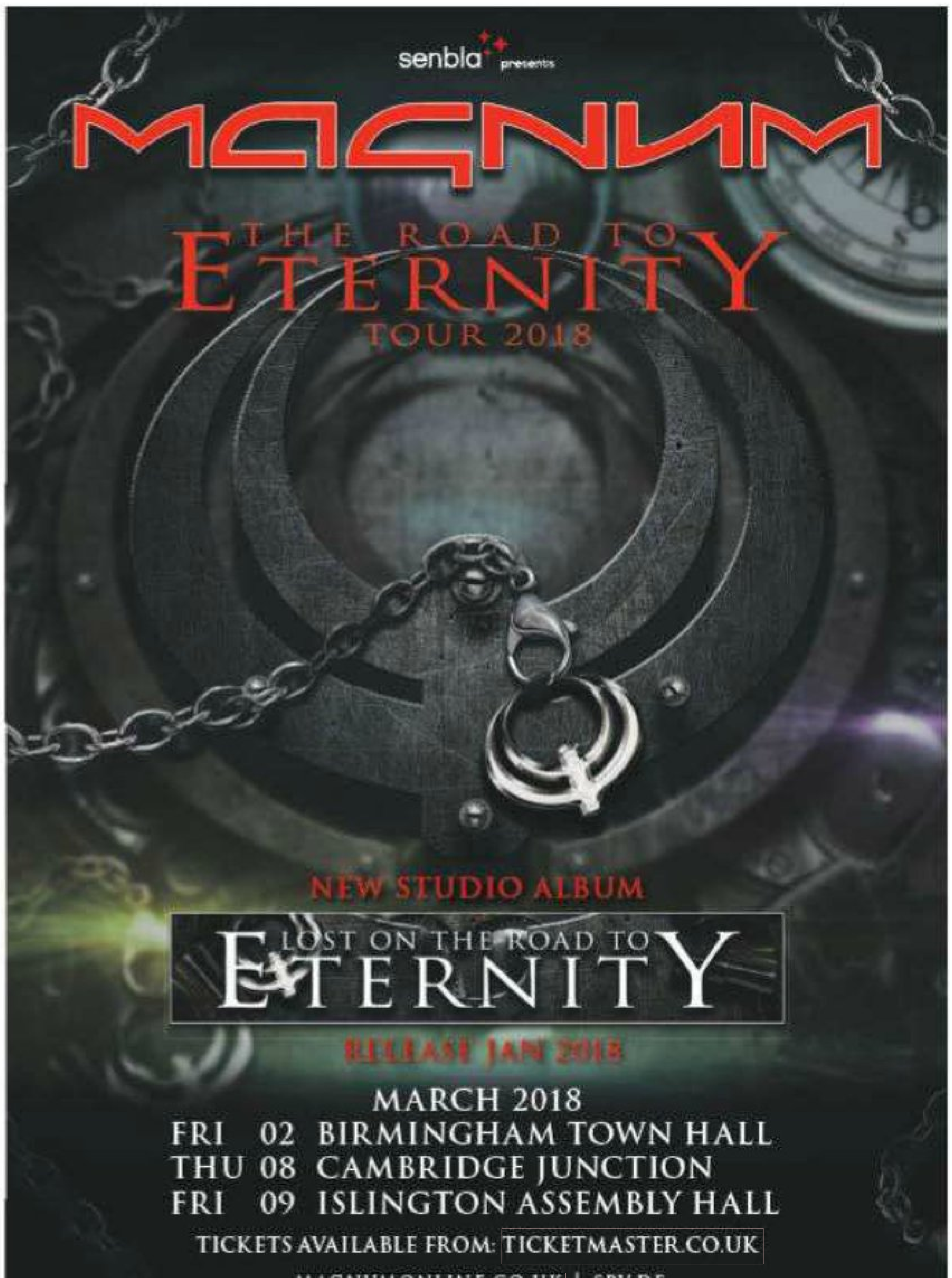

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The Fab Three: (l-r) John Woloschuk, Terry Draper and Dee Long.

Magical Mystery Tour

They were The Beatles. Or so a million record buyers thought in '77. Forty years later, **Klaatu** come clean on what was quite a trip.

Words: **Ian Ravendale**

It was one of Capitol Records' most mysterious releases. The record, cryptically titled *3:47 EST* in Canada, but just bearing the band's name for international distribution, carried no information about the group, no photos, no songwriting credits. The band were called Klaatu. But, for a time, rumour had it that they were another, far more famous, band entirely…

Released in August 1976, the Klaatu album earned several enthusiastic reviews. Canada's *Record Month* called it "a terrific concept album", while *Trouser Press* said it was "an impressive sci-fi answer to Bowie". But the reviews didn't translate into sales, and it looked like *Klaatu* was headed straight to the bargain bin.

Then, on February 17, 1977, a feature headlined 'Could Klaatu Be Beatles? Mystery Is A Magical Tour', written by Steve Smith, a young journalist working for Rhode Island daily newspaper the *Providence Journal*, changed everything.

"We used to get a bunch of albums to review. If they weren't reviewed they went in a pile, and if you wanted anything you grabbed it," Smith tells *Classic Rock*. "I saw the Klaatu album, took it home and listened to it. It had Beatle-sounding stuff, so I started researching. And couldn't get any answers."

The main question Smith wanted an answer to was simply: why did the album sound *so* much like the Fab Four? "It struck me almost immediately," he says. "The track *Sub-Rosa Subway* is completely Beatlish."

In his 1977 review, Smith wrote that the song's vocals are "exactly like Paul McCartney", the drumming "like Ringo Starr's" and "the guitar work like George Harrison's and John Lennon's". *Doctor Marvello*, said Smith, sounded like *Blue Jay Way*-period George Harrison, "with the rest of The Beatles backing". Other songs had "digs from The Beatles' past, such as singing through fuzz effects, 'Yeah, Yeah, Yeahs' and unmistakable harmonies".

The sleeve of Ringo Starr's 1974 solo album *Goodnight Vienna* had the drummer standing in the doorway of the spaceship from the 1951 film *The Day The Earth Stood Still*, next to the giant robot and dressed in the outfit that actor Michael Rennie wore as Klaatu, the alien peace emissary in the film. Smith wondered if the name of the band was a clue in itself.

Summing up (and hedging his bets), Smith concluded that this mystery band could be: 1. The Beatles. 2. A couple of The Beatles with other people. 3. A Beatles-backed band. 4. A completely unknown but ingenious and talented band.

Smith contacted Capitol Records for more information but got nothing. "Capitol told me they didn't know anything. I didn't believe them. You don't just sign a band blind. They said they'd signed these guys through Frank Davies, who'd released them on Daffodil Records in Canada."

"I'd recorded and produced two or three of the Daffodil artists at [Rush producer] Terry Brown's studio in Toronto," Davies says today. "He played me two or three of the Klaatu tracks and I told him he didn't need to play me anything else, I wanted to sign them. My label was centred in Canada, and what I would do with my artists back then was go out and put together a US deal, or deals around the world. I played the tracks to Rupert Perry who was head of A&R at Capitol Records in the US. He loved them and said he'd like to sign the band."

> "It turned into a monster that was beyond our power and control."
> **John Woloschuk**

But Klaatu weren't going to go down the tried and tested route. "The guys wanted to try a new approach," says Davies. "They wouldn't do photos, or interviews, or have a bio. I was cool with that. It was different. They weren't going to play live, either."

"We were three unknown guys from Toronto and didn't want the focus to be on us as individuals," says Klaatu vocalist/bassist/keyboard player John Woloschuk. "We really wanted the music to be the focal point. Also, we knew that the music we wanted to record couldn't possibly be replicated on stage by three people."

For his article, Steve Smith asked Frank Davies whether Klaatu were The Beatles. "No," Davies replied. Smith then went through some of the 'clues' he'd, found and Davies told him vaguely that he's "pretty accurate".

"I was definitely playing coy!" Davies says today. "By this time the album had been out six months. We did have some great press on it, but it had only sold seven or eight thousand copies ▷

Could Klaatu be Beatles?
Mystery is a magical tour

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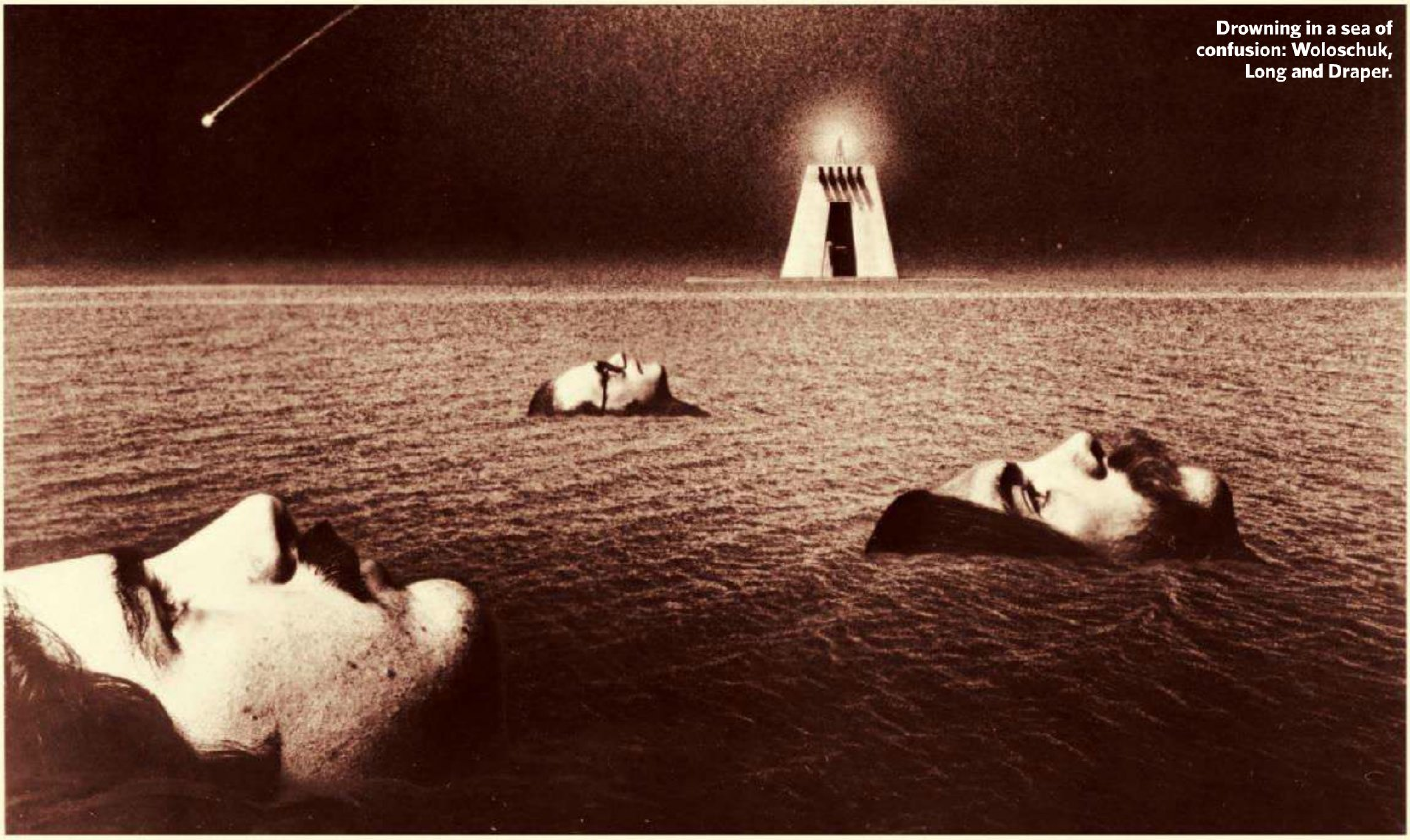

Drowning in a sea of confusion: Woloschuk, Long and Draper.

in the US. We'd reached a point where we thought the first album was over, and the band had already started working on the second, which was shaping up beautifully. Then Steve's story was published and all hell broke loose sales-wise."

Klaatu formed when John Woloschuk began working at English producer/engineer Terry Brown's Toronto Sound Studio in September 1974. Brown heard and liked the demos Woloschuk had made with guitarist Dee Long and signed them to his production company.

Drummer Terry Draper joined in February 1975 and the trio began recording what became the *Klaatu* album in studio downtime. "Terry Brown was our engineer and co-producer," says Draper. "The fourth member of the band. He made us sound fabulous. The album was recorded over three years. We all had regular jobs so we used to record in the evenings and late at night."

With the full album recorded and ready to go, Frank Davies signed Klaatu to Capitol. "They didn't know who we were," Woloschuk confirms, adding: "They signed us on the strength of hearing the first album. It was Frank that swung that deal on those conditions. They must have believed in the music enough to take a chance."

"Capitol never got to meet the band," says Davies. "Rupert [Perry, A&R] went along with the conditions because he wanted the band. He said that he at least had to meet them and watch them sign the record agreement. I told him he didn't have to because I'd warrant that they were signed to me, my label and my production company. 'The lawyers will be involved – my lawyers, their lawyers. They're signing to you, through me and that's that.'

"It took a little while, particularly when we got to Capitol's Business Affairs. It was one of those things where you needed to have the confidence with the music. Which I did. Island had previously put out a one-off single and I had other labels interested. I said: 'If you don't want them under these conditions, don't sign them.'"

> **"Someone told us about the rumour. We laughed and went back to work."**
>
> **Terry Draper**

Capitol took the chance and started sending out Steve Smith's review all over the world. The gamble of signing the band paid off, and the rumours generated by Smith's article soon began to take on a life of their own.

"We were in England, recording," remembers Terry Draper. "Somebody told us about The Beatles rumour, and we all had a good laugh and went back to work. When we returned to Canada, it went ridiculous. *Cashbox*, *Billboard*, all the magazines, everybody was talking about it. It went around the world via the United Press agency. We didn't know what to do. Frank started having to field the calls.

"Everybody who was making money – including us – was quite delighted that we were selling records and people were talking about us. So, did we want to come out of the closet, squash the rumour and stop record sales? The whole anonymity thing was to have private lives, be a normal person, still make music and millions of dollars. That was the goal."

As the story gathered momentum, more Fab Four-related clues began to emerge. "Everybody investigating the story found out I used to work for EMI Records in London, who The Beatles were signed to," remembers Davies. "They then found out that Terry Brown had been an engineer at Olympic Studios in London, and they starting putting all these little pieces together, with Capitol ending up with the record."

Meanwhile, AM and FM radio in Providence began to play tracks from the album and they interviewed Smith on air. Other stations caught on to the story, and within weeks Klaatu were being played all across the US. The band themselves were keeping out of the rumour mill and beavering away on their second album, *Hope*.

"At that point we didn't know how much impact it was going to have on our career," says Woloschuk. "It was a global thing. I'm not sure how many pressing plants Capitol had assigned to the [first] album but they had to go into emergency mode. They didn't have enough copies to go round and missed a lot of sales. It turned into a monster that was beyond our power and control."

"All sorts of press did interviews with Rupert Perry," Davies continues. "They didn't believe that Capitol didn't know who the group was, which added to the situation. 'This record label is sinking money into this band, so they must have met them. So there must be something behind this…'"

By now the 'Klaatu – are they/aren't they?' rumours had reached The Beatles and their inner circle. Tony Bramwell was one of The Beatles' childhood friends and had worked closely with them and manager Brian Epstein during the 60s.

"People started saying that Klaatu sounded Beatley, and Capitol would neither confirm nor deny it," says Bramwell. "Capitol in America weren't that bright at the time. They were being coy about it and hoping people would be taken in. I thought: 'What the bollocks is all this about?' I was working for Polydor Records in 1977 but still also doing promotions for the individual Beatles, so I knew what they were doing – and knew that Klaatu wasn't them."

Frank Davies was originally from the UK and

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had worked for Parlophone in the 1960s. After the Klaatu story hit, he received a postcard from his former EMI colleague Paul McCartney, on which the ex-Beatle said he was "having a laugh watching all the rumours swirling". Capitol continued to stoke the flames by placing an advert in the music trade magazines with a picture of the sun from the *Klaatu* album cover and the slogan 'Klaatu is Klaatu'.

"It was a weak way of denying the rumour," says Woloschuk. "There was never any intention of milking the rumour on our part. We were trying to hold on to our anonymity, though. We were young and idealistic and thought we could weather the storm. Which turned out to be incorrect."

At the height of the media storm, Klaatu and Terry Brown were in the UK working on *Hope*, a cosmic-themed concept album that had its orchestral parts recorded over three afternoons at Olympic Studios with the London Philharmonic Orchestra. Because of the ongoing sales of the *Klaatu* album, Capitol put back the release of *Hope* by several months. "We were delighted," says Draper. "It gave us more time to finish it."

Several months after the Klaatu story had broken worldwide, over at the *Providence Journal* Steve Smith had seen the light. He'd done some digging and had located an former girlfriend of one of the band. "She said: 'If you'd contacted me a couple of months ago I'd have told you the truth! But now I think it's funny.'"

Dwight Douglas, the Programme Director of WWDC-FM radio station in Washington DC, took a more academic approach to unmasking Klaatu. He visited the Library Of Congress and discovered that the songs from the album were copyrighted not to Lennon, McCartney, Harrison or Starkey, but to Draper, Long, Woloschuk and his then songwriting partner Dino Tome.

"When people found out we weren't The Beatles, they thought we'd perpetrated the rumour and duped them," recalls Terry Draper. "And that came back to haunt us."

"The whole world resigned themselves that we weren't The Beatles," says Woloschuk. "*Rolling Stone* magazine gave us their 'Hype Of The Year' award!"

Released in September 1977, *Hope* was Klaatu's most ambitious and mature work and went on to sell a respectable 400,000 copies. But despite this, the writing was clearly on the wall for the band.

"We got some great reviews on the *Hope* album," says Frank Davies. "But for every great review, we'd get a newspaper article saying: 'Hoax!' or 'Scam!' and a lot of negative press. We'd release an album and it would go virtually unnoticed. We couldn't get arrested, no matter what we did."

Klaatu's third album, *Sir Army Suit*, had cover drawings by artist Hugh Syme of a group of people that included the three Klaatu members, along with Frank Davies, Terry Brown and his wife and the Queen. "We buried ourselves among other people," says Draper.

"Capitol were now asking us to do interviews, so our names became known to them," adds Woloschuk. "With every successive album they wanted to open the door a little bit wider."

Capitol picked up the option for a fourth album, on the condition that it was recorded in Los Angeles with a producer of the label's choice. Chris Bond, who had produced *Rich Girl* for Hall & Oates and also had success with The Knack, was brought in and used his own preferred musicians on many of the tracks rather than Klaatu themselves.

> **"To engineer the press furore that happened was way beyond our level of intelligence."**
>
> **John Woloschuk**

"We resisted it," says Davies. "He was trying to make a pop album. It didn't work."

The result, 1980's *Endangered Species*, credited to Long, Draper and Woloschuk for the first time, was released in the US but then withdrawn. After the success of the first Klaatu album, it would have been logical for the label to suggest the band ramp up their inner Lennon and McCartney and make another Beatle-esque record. But they didn't.

"They never asked us that," Woloschuk says. "If anything, they wanted us to sound more American. They told us they wanted us to write songs that could be played live. They wanted us to go on a radio tour, which we did in Canada, and the album did moderately well here. In the States they buried the album."

"There was someone in Capitol's marketing department who didn't like the band at all," says Draper, "and when the album was about to ship he said: 'If I have to promote this album, I quit!' So Capitol didn't market the album, and let it die so this fella would stay."

Surprisingly, the Klaatu/Capitol relationship didn't end there. "Rupert Perry is a very nice man, and he felt bad because he'd coerced us into coming to LA, working with a producer, hiring some strange musicians and then not promoting the record so it died a death," says Draper. "So he allowed us to do a fifth and final album with Capitol, for Canada only and not recoupable."

Klaatu's final album, *Magentalane*, released in 1981, was made on a shoestring budget on the condition that they played live to support it. Bringing in three musicians from the newly defunct fellow Canadian band Max Webster, Klaatu went out and played shows first as support to Prism and then headlining smaller venues.

"We toured for nine months and had some fun, but couldn't make the leap from the bars to the seated venues," says Draper. "We filled our gigs every night because people came to see the novelty act that was once thought to be The Beatles."

The song *Knee Deep In Love* from the *Endangered Species* album was a Top 40 hit in Canada, but the romance between Klaatu and the US was well and truly over, and the band split in 1982.

These days the former members of Klaatu are very open about their Beatles influences. "I'm probably one of the biggest Beatles fans in the whole world," says John Woloschuk, "but we did try to branch out into other influences, like 10cc for example."

"If you're going to steal – or learn – you steal from the best," says Terry Draper. "Nobody's going to steal from a bad band."

True to the philosophy that made – and then broke – them, the former members of Klaatu are still involved in music. Terry Draper and Dee Long release solo albums, Draper oversees Klaatu's catalogue and remastering. John Woloschuk occasionally performs in a band with friends, and administrates Magentalane Music to look after Klaatu's business affairs.

"From the nineties until now there's been a big resurgence in interest in Klaatu," says Frank Davies. "They held a convention in 2005 here in Toronto for Klaatu fans. People came from all over the world. The band played unplugged and the crowd loved it."

"Our fans tend to be extremely loyal," says Woloschuk. "They stick with us even though there hasn't been any new Klaatu product out for decades. There are some younger fans who weren't born when Klaatu was around."

Steve Smith has mixed feelings about the whole Klaatu experience. "I feel kind of bad about what eventually happened when they got poo-pooed," he says. "After it came out that they weren't The Beatles, nobody wanted to hear it any more. I thought they were a really talented band. To this day I still like them. *Hope* is a fantastic album."

"To engineer the press furore that happened was way beyond our level of intelligence," concludes John Woloschuk. "Nobody could have planned that. We were the victims to the rumour.

"I see the gold records on my wall and I know what we accomplished. We got very good at what we were doing. It's a shame that we weren't allowed to have a place in the music industry workforce. We were forced out of it."

Remastered editions of the Klaatu albums and DVDs are available from www.klaatu.org

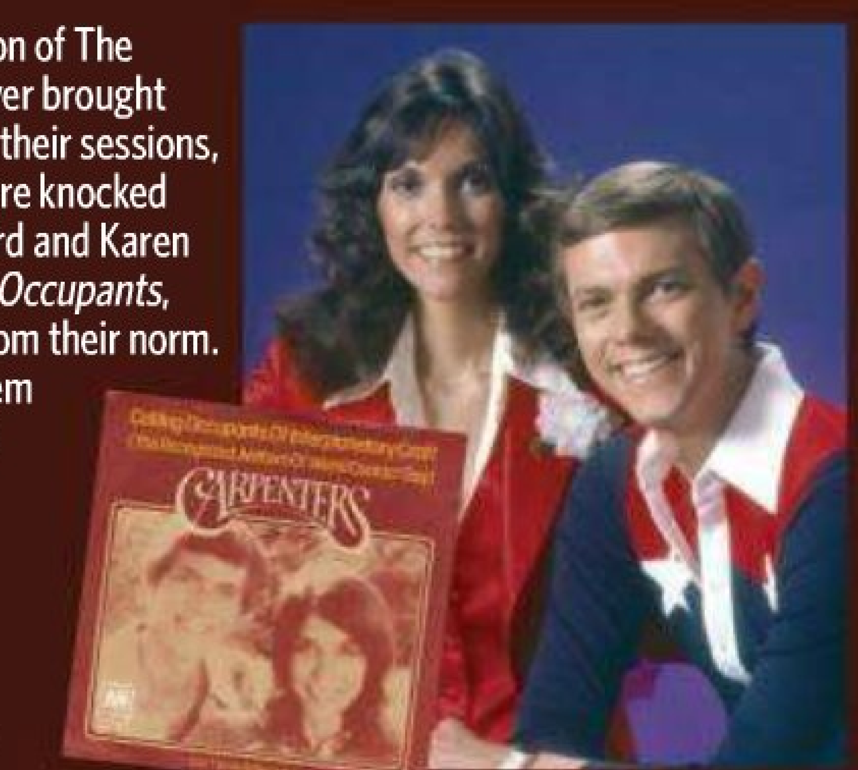
The Carpenters Connection

Calling Occupants Of Interplanetary Craft, co-written by John Woloschuk and Terry Draper, was Klaatu's *3:47 EST* album's memorable opener, with a hippie-dippy message of embracing the aliens that are watching the Earth.

"Those lyrics were based on an article that appeared in a book called *The Flying Saucer Reader*," Woloschuk explains. "There really was a 'World Contact Day' in 1951. Some of the lyrics in the song were lifted from the message that had been mentally telepathed to space by all these members of this cult. I think we were hoping for the aliens but not expecting them."

The song came to the attention of The Carpenters. "Their guitar player brought a copy of our album to one of their sessions, played it to them and they were knocked out," says Woloschuk. "Richard and Karen [Carpenter] wanted to cover *Occupants*, which was a real departure from their norm. It took a lot of courage for them to do that. It's definitely been our most successful earner from our entire catalogue."

The Carpenters' version became an international hit, and subsequently appeared on their *Greatest Hits* album.



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DOOM WITH A VIEW

Classic Rock goes off the grid to track down the eclectic, eccentric **Electric Wizard**, who tell us about swapping doom for Detroit, geese attacks, utopian nightmares and the weirdness of Wimborne.

Words: **Nick Hasted**

If you're off to see the Wizard, you'd better take a bloody good map. Despite marking a quarter of a century as the UK's premier doom-metal band in 2018 – and releasing a ninth album, *Wizard Bloody Wizard*, which escapes the genre altogether to revel in classic Detroit sounds – Electric Wizard remain off the grid, underground.

The woman in the ticket office at Barnstaple station is knitting when *CR*'s train concludes its journey through autumnal Devon woodland and waterlogged fields. It's the sort of place Holmes and Watson used to pull into, part of the "smiling and beautiful English countryside" Conan Doyle feared for its hidden, blood-red deeds. Then it's a drive to the edge of a publess village, where the hedgerows close in as we rattle down a winding, rutted lane to a dead end. This is where Electric Wizard live.

All is still for a minute, under suddenly leaden skies. The *Texas Chain Saw Massacre* West Country remake vibe is both dispelled and enhanced when Justin Oborn opens his front door.

Oborn and Liz Buckingham, his American co-guitarist bandmate and wife since 2003, are both dressed in black (him in T-shirt with a flaking Dracula decal, her in a turtleneck and a silver amulet), with bell-bottoms that suit the emporium of sleaze, horror, rock and erotica their rented farmhouse has become. They moved here from a similarly isolated, black-painted house where they made the grimly depressing, grinding 2014 album *Time To Die*. That record's sampled satanic scare stories, although typical of straight-baiting Wizard antics such as 2012's *Legalise Drugs And Murder* EP, sounded queasily believable for once. But this new HQ belongs to collectors, not a coven.

"She'll blow your mind. She's the girl with the power to turn you on! To turn you off!" a poster for *The Virgin Witch* promises in an upstairs hallway, while in the bathroom, *Sexual Witchcraft*'s poster has a woman spread-legged before a phallic black mass candle. Similar posters of stylishly and luridly nude women, from decadent Victorian Aubrey Beardsley illustrations to the 70s golden age of Euro exploitation cinema, fill the farmhouse walls, testament to Buckingham's taste for the era's shame-free erotica. An East Coast outsider with an English singer dad and dancer mum, she's "liked weird stuff since I was a child".

Oborn's collections merge with hers, in cabinets full of LPs, DVDs, rock and film biographies, the Marquis de Sade and the Necronomicon. Stuffed black crows pose in flight, a carved monkey grins, a grandmother clock ticks, and a human skull sits

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Countryside Alliance: Electric Wizard in the landscape that inspires and informs their music.

"North Dorset's huge, open landscape was always an inspiration for our music. That's why we started sounding so epic and slow."

Jus Oborn

on crossed human leg bones, on which former Wizard drummer Shaun Rutter once beat out tribal rhythms. The kitchen favours belladonna, hemlock and cyanide cellars over salt and pepper. But an exercise bike hints at just how normally, tastefully appointed the Wizard house is beneath its vintage veneer of flesh and bones.

Satyr IX Recording Studio, where *Wizard Bloody Wizard* was recorded, is a regular room with barely enough space for its analogue tape reel and Simon Poole's drum kit. Full-time drummer in Electric Wizard's ever-evolving line-up since 2014, the grey-bearded Poole also lives up a narrow lane, in a Cornish home with, he says, "similar" decor.

This dead-end house "appeals to me perfectly", Oborn says. "I have been disappointed by a lot of people, and you end up burning bridges along the way. I've always liked the romantic idea of living under the radar. Like dune buggies with machine-guns on," he smiles, referencing Neil Young's Charles Manson ode *Ambulance Blues.* "That's what we're working on."

It's quite an American attitude, to demand the right to be left alone to do their own thing. "Yeah. I've shown him – let's go do it," Buckingham says. "I've got him past the class system you have here."

"Your influence has led to me living like this now," Oborn admits to her. "I was prepared to do what I had to do [before Buckingham joined Electric Wizard]. The band'll be finished, and I'll drive a forklift again…"

That sort of despair informed *Time To Die* heavily. "We were totally depressed," Oborn recalls. "The band was up shit creek, or it felt like it. We'd had arguments with everybody. Financial difficulties. And personal difficulties as well."

Wizard Bloody Wizard is contrastingly playful, even poppy (circa 1971, if Tony Blackburn could play singles about heroin injection and virgin sacrifice). With Buckingham the only other constant since the original Wizard line-up split in 2003, Poole has been joined by another American, bassist Clayton Burgess in "essentially a new band", Oborn says. With sludgy yet widescreen doom-rock landmarks such as *Dopethrone* (2000) in their past, they're now steeped in classic rock, from Ted Nugent's Amboy Dukes and the Alice Cooper Band to the slashing chords of the Stooges' *Raw Power*.

"You do get nostalgic for the past," Oborn considers, "and the Detroit sound's been a big influence on the album. I came up with this fantasy that in 1971 they built a tunnel between Dorset and Detroit! I like the working-class element to that music – that's similar to Sabbath as well. I like ➢

Electric Wizard: (l-r) Liz Buckingham, Jus Oborn, Simon Poole, Clayton Burgess.

the idea that you can use rock'n'roll to become something more than you were born into."

'All my pleasures are now a crime,' from *Hear My Sirens Scream*, is a key lyric in a year of constant moral panics – often with individual good cause, but collectively acting to put the sort of perversity on Wizard HQ's walls under lock and key.

"It seems like we're moving towards a utopian nightmare at the moment," Oborn says, laughing. "I always think of Amon Düül's *Apocalyptic Dawn*, where they talk about the perfect world, where there's no hate, there's no love; everything's just grey and boring. We're definitely resisting that!"

Buckingham confesses herself "quite paranoid" about the times. "It's heading towards not being allowed to do anything any more, and not being allowed to think for yourself, when you should be able to. It's Victorian, some stuff. What's wrong with breasts? Why have they become obscene, according to Facebook? It's bizarre."

Wizard Bloody Wizard's cover, with its title daubed in blood on a breast-skimming nude female torso, makes a tongue-in-cheek stand against this.

"I like the art of the record sleeve," Oborn argues. "I wanted to design one where you go into a record shop and think: 'I've got to hear this.' That's how I approach music – with wonder. The cover's also tongue-in-cheek. The title, even though it's a Sabbath reference, was meant to be a withering English comment said by Alan Partridge, or in *On The Buses*. 'You've got a naked body, you've got blood on it. Wizard bloody wizard…'"

You've let yourselves down, you've let rock'n'roll down…

"Exactly!" he laughs. "But no one got it."

Though their ability to piss-take is often missed, Electric Wizard support rock's world-changing intent. "It's just music now," Oborn sighs. "It's a pity, because we came in at the tail end of that [rebellious rock] era, at the end of the nineties. It felt like we had a little bit of the rock'n'roll dream, up until touring America in the early 2000s, when loads of people were turning up at gigs, and there were groupies, there were drugs."

"It totally had that vibe," Buckingham agrees. "I was a fan then, and I remember the feeling was like what I'd read in old rock biographies. And you acted ridiculous! They acted the part then, and were well into just doing stupid shit. It was real."

"Steal cars and threaten to kill people," Oborn reminisces. "Everyone still believed in it, so you could still act out those kinds of fantasies then, because the fans, the promoters and everyone were willing participants. That's changed. There was a lot of idealism. Maybe somebody let somebody down along the way. Maybe it's Kurt Cobain's fault. It's really corny, but the fans are the only thing that keeps me believing in it. When we play live, they're almost on the brink of revolution. It feels then like you can still change people."

> **"There was still this idea that people who were into rock music were in league with the devil."**
>
> **Jus Oborn on mid-80s Dorset**

Wimborne, Dorset, was the place where, growing up, Oborn decided to change himself. He plotted the band that became Electric Wizard back in 1985, when he was 13. "It was quite oppressive," he says of Wimborne then. "And there was still this idea, which I found exciting, that people who were into rock music were in league with the devil. And there was a lot of violence, and you'd get beaten up. On a bike ride, two farmers' kids held us up with shotguns, took us into their courtyard and set the geese attacking us. We were just screaming, for hours!"

"Oh my God!" Buckingham gasps.

"That wasn't much fun," Oborn continues equably. "But I liked the isolationism."

His home town was, though, somewhere to escape. "You'd stand on the bridge over the bypass, thinking: 'This road goes to London. But we're stuck here.' At the time it felt like a dead end. Although, oddly, Wimborne market had quite a few doom-metal albums."

"Wimborne sounds the weirdest place I've ever heard about," Buckingham says flatly to him.

"It is a weird place," Oborn considers. "It's the oldest settled part of England. The first king of England's buried there. There's underground tunnels beneath the town that link up to an underground Masonic temple, apparently, and a weird library presided over by a hunchback. And I grew up with the Morris men [at Wimborne's folk festival]. I like the paganism and the symbology in that. We weren't from Detroit. But there was something we could tap into, aesthetically and lyrically."

Only Buckingham seems to grasp the scale of West Country Weird that Electric Wizard's pagan metal springs from. She first rehearsed with them in the New Forest, until the local lord appeared in a suit of armour and threatened to behead them if they didn't keep it down. "Tosser," Oborn grumbles.

"I've loved Led Zeppelin my whole life," Buckingham says, "but I never got how English they were till I came here."

Everything in Electric Wizard, Oborn concedes, is rooted in where he's from. "North Dorset's got quite an epic landscape," he explains. "People think of rural England being higgledy-piggledy, small and quaint. But North Dorset round [an Iron Age hill fort] Badbury Rings is a huge, open landscape, almost silent and forbidding. And that was always an inspiration for our music as we rehearsed there. That's why we started sounding so epic and slow, and having that expanse to the sound."

The wind and rain are whipping up when we drive to a pub for dinner. "This new album was based in this landscape here in a way," Buckingham says, "and the open land at the front of the house. We used to jam in the garage, locked up in the darkness. Then we'd go into the light and record."

Wizard Bloody Wizard is out now via Spinefarm/Witchfinder Records.

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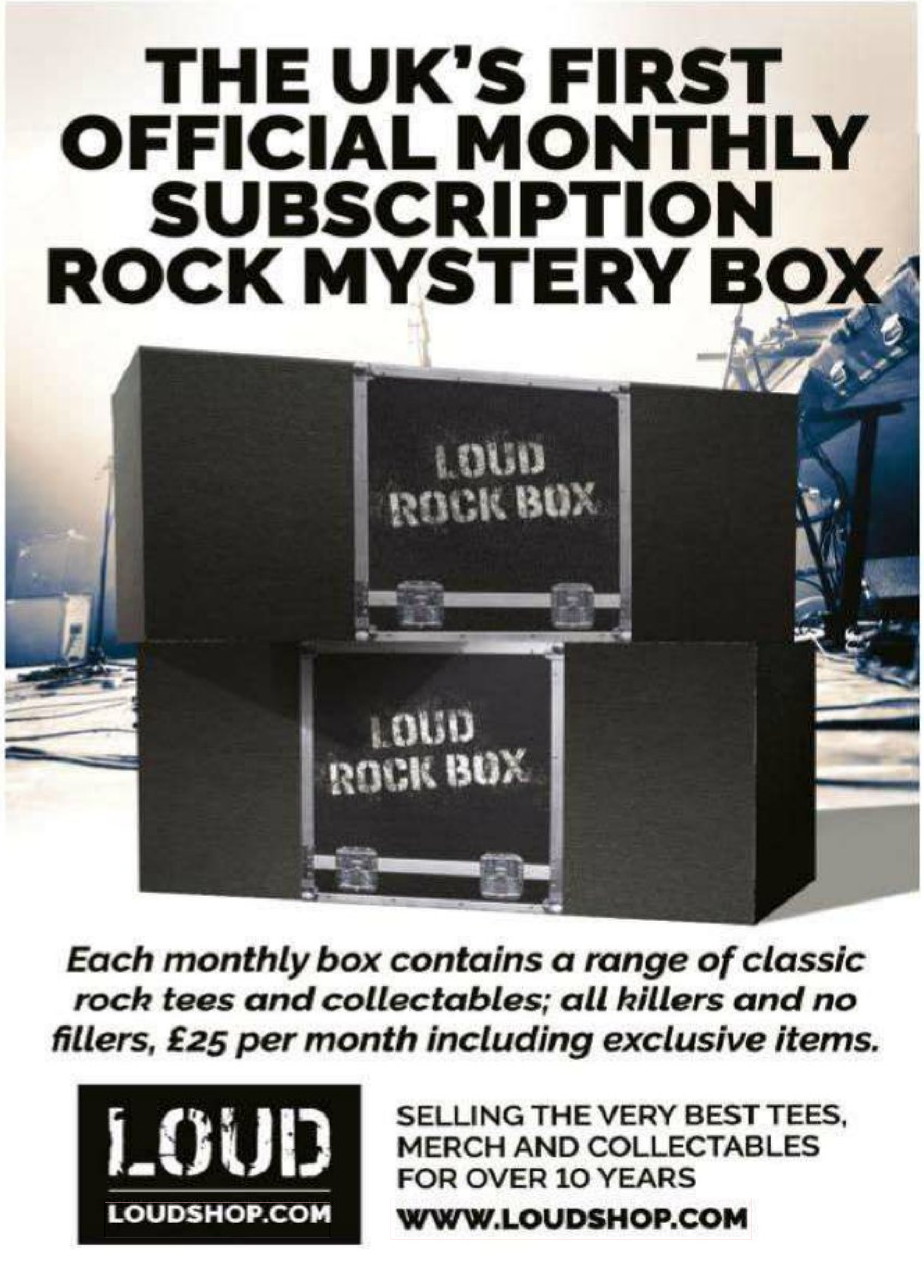
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BULLETP

In 1995, after four albums and eight years with **L.A. Guns**, Phil Lewis ran out of ammo and joined Nikki Six. It's taken 14 years to reunite with his old partner Tracii Guns. Ah, peace in our time…

Words: **Dave Everley**

If you'd called a psychic telephone hotline in Los Angeles in the late 1990s, there's a chance you might have heard Phil Lewis on the other end. The British-born singer was on one of his periodic stints out of L.A. Guns, the band he had joined a decade or so earlier after relocating to California, when a friend asked if he fancied making some easy money. 'Why not?' he thought. The fact he knew absolutely nothing about astrology wasn't an issue. It was just a matter of keeping the gullible rubes who called the premium-rate number on the line for as long as possible.

"I was recording a solo album at the time, and I had my baby girl in the other room, watching her on a video monitor," says Lewis now. "Every now and then the phone would go, this three ring alarm, which indicated it would be from the psychic hotline. It was real basic psychology. Even though I knew nothing, I was pretty bloody good at it: 'You're Leo, Asparagus rising,' you know."

Amazingly, his shtick worked. But guilt quickly crept in. "The people who were calling weren't too bright," he says ruefully. "I felt like I was exploiting them. I stopped after a couple of weeks."

Lewis was no Mystic Meg. Yet even if he had been, it's unlikely he'd have been able to guess the wayward course L.A. Guns would plot over the next 20 years. The band may have helped usher in the Sunset Strip scene of the 1980s, but their career since then has been defined by fallings out, departures, firings and a bitter schism between Lewis and founding guitarist Tracii Guns.

For much of this century, there have been two different versions of L.A. Guns doing the rounds. One consisted of Lewis, long-time drummer Steve Riley and a rotating cast of hired hands, makeweights and ringers. The other was steered by Guns himself and featured, well, much the same. The two versions spent more than a decade warily circling each other, lobbing the occasional barb via the media. This wasn't the Wagnerian drama of Guns N' Roses, a band that Tracii Guns himself had co-founded back in the depths of the 1980s. This was a pair of pissed-up old street corner hookers screaming insults at each other from across the road.

And that's how things looked like continuing until someone – anyone – keeled over and died. But then just under two years ago, Lewis and Guns patched things up. That was hardly front-page news . What takes it beyond the usual clichés is that the album the retooled and recharged L.A. Guns have just put out, the winkingly titled *The Missing Peace*, is one of the most potent hard rock records of recent months.

"Phil and I never had a problem with each other, it was always people around us," says Tracii Guns. "But we were always surrounded by drama. It's finally time to put that drama to bed."

Guns himself is the first to admit that his band were never Sunset Strip A-listers in the way that Mötley Crüe or GN'R were. Even at their commercial peak, around the time of their second album, 1989's *Cocked And Loaded*, L.A. Around theat time the band were playing to two or three thousand people a night. "After the first six hundred people it's all the same anyway," he says modestly (a polite and self-effacing man, he does 'modest' well).

Guns himself wasn't just there at the birth of the glam metal scene, he predates it. Unlike all those arrivistes that followed, he's Los Angeles through and through. As a kid, he loved rock'n'roll – Aerosmith, Led Zeppelin, the Eagles, Elton John. One of his best friends at junior high school was a curly-haired kid called Saul Hudson – later to rechristen himself Slash. "We'd walk to school every day, having these really combative discussions about music – what was cool, what was not," he says. "Being really competitive with each other, but loving each other at the same time."

He was barely 17 when he put the first incarnation of L.A. Guns together in 1983 – not old enough to drink legally (he was never a big drinker anyway). Mötley Crüe had become the first band from that scene to break big nationally, and everyone wanted a piece of their action. L.A. Guns were no different.

"We were packing out shows right away," he says. "That felt great, to look out into the crowd at the Troubadour and see David Lee Roth or Nikki Sixx standing there. That was the addiction. Still is."

L.A. Guns shared bills with other similarly hungry hopefuls: WASP, Poison, Hollywood Rose, the latter fronted by a red-haired wildcat calling himself Axl Rose. Tracii initially met Axl via Hollywood Rose guitarist Izzy Stradlin', who was crashing at Guns' mom's house. "I'll never forget watching Axl walk up to the microphone for the first time in soundcheck," he says. "He opened his mouth and I was, like, 'Holy shit, who is this guy?'"

> **"They put us in that f**king hair-metal band category, but we weren't. We were a dirty, greasy biker band."**
> **Phil Lewis**

Within a year, L.A. Guns had merged with another local band, Hollywood Rose, and combined their names: Guns N' Roses. The two who shared the driving seat became tight friends.

"Me and Axl were faux-homeless," says Guns. "We had places to stay, but we fancied being out on the street, hanging out and taking in Hollywood together. It was a great experience and there was no downside." He laughs. "Except when it came to a head and we had a disagreement. And that was the end of me being in Guns N' Roses."

Guns was too ambitious to quit now, and he reactivated L.A. Guns. Their early years were a struggle, but given that Los Angeles was rapidly becoming the epicentre of the music industry, not that much of ⊳

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ROOF

Revved up: Phil Lewis and Tracii Guns in 1988.

L.A. Guns 2017: Shane Fitzgibbons, Phil Lewis, Tracii Guns, Johnny Martin, Michael Grant.

a struggle. The main obstacle appeared to be certain members of the band themselves.

'We were at a signing meeting with this label, and the A&R guy goes to our singer at the time, 'Hey buddy, whaddya want to get out of this as career?'" he recalls, "and the guy just nodded forward. He was strung out on heroin."

The hapless frontman was promptly dispatched, leaving the door open for the man who would help take L.A. Guns to the next level.

He may have spent 30 years living in Los Angeles, but Phil Lewis could still pass himself off as minor member of the British aristocracy, at least vocally. His precise consonants and easy manner are a world away from the transatlantic drawl he deploys on record. That's what a good private school education buys you.

He's also a lot more reserved than his image as a louche, leather-trousered eternal brat would suggest, though he's always friendly. "The first time I met Phil, he was sat at a table in the Cat And Fiddle pub in Hollywood, hiding behind some sunglasses, shy as you can be," Guns says of his bandmate. "He's a loner in a lot of ways, always looking to be accepted."

But Lewis has more miles on the rock'n'roll clock than many of his contemporaries. In the late 70s, he was the singer in Girl, the London sleaze rockers whose influence on the LA bands that followed half a decade later has never been credited in full. After that band collapsed in on itself, he joined Tormé, the group put together by journeyman guitarist Bernie Tormé, only to find that band stymied by mass public disinterest.

"Things weren't going terribly well in the old country," he says now. "Tormé were tearing it up every night and we couldn't get arrested. Rock'n'roll was just a filthy term for the labels back then. Everybody wanted fucking Buck's Fizz back then. Plus I had a few personal issues for the ladies. It was a good time for Scotty to beam me up."

Lewis was vaguely aware of what was happening in Los Angeles – he knew people who knew people. And it was one of those people, an ex-pat Welshman named Alan Jones, who would be key in bringing him over. When Jones called Lewis to see if fancied joining a band he was managing named L.A. Guns, the singer didn't have to think twice.

> **"If Pavarotti had come and offered to sing *Sex Action*, I'd have probably said: 'Yeah, you're in.'"**
>
> **Tracii Guns**

"I went, 'Is tomorrow alright?'" he says. "It had been raining in London for twenty-eight straight days. The day I left, it was still raining. They picked me up at the airport in a jeep. I was laying in the back, looking up at the palm trees. I was, like, 'Yeah, this is going to work.'"

Lewis' 'audition' basically amounted to him saying "one-two" into a microphone, such was Guns' belief in the man he'd only met a matter of hours before. Hands were shaken, agreements were made. And then they floored the pedal.

L.A. Guns' self-titled debut album came out in 1988. If they were behind the curve compared to some of their peers, then they quickly made up for it. Songs like *One More Reason* and *Sex Action* became MTV staples. They looked like as much as a band: with their uniform black leather jackets, black T-shirts, dyed black hair, this was The Wild Ones: The Heavy Metal Years.

"They put us in that fucking hair metal band category, but we weren't," says Lewis with barely concealed distaste. "We were a dirty, greasy biker band – a real biker band. As opposed to the other bands at the time, who were all tits and teeth, doing goofy shit."

The debut album performed well – upwards of half a million sales. The second album, *Cocked And Loaded*, fared even better, passing the million-selling platinum mark. They found themselves swarmed with hangers-on and new friends. Some of this was good – everyone likes to be popular. Some of it less so. "When you've got the fucking publicist's girlfriend choosing your single, you know something's not right," says Lewis.

But costs were spiralling – the singer talks about "the million dollar budget" for their third album, *Hollywood Vampires* – and sales weren't keeping up. Suddenly, the hangers-on vanished, drawn away by other, more fashionable bands.

But changing trends were the least of their problems. A bigger issue was that Lewis and Guns were pulling in different directions. The guitarist wanted to heavy the band up, bring them closer to prevailing early 90s trends. Lewis was still hoisting the sleazy rock'n'roll flag high. Things became strained, and then untenable – it wasn't so much the record industry that did for L.A. Guns as L.A. Guns themselves.

"The whole thing was a claustrophobic situation," says Lewis. "It was awful, incredibly toxic. It certainly didn't help the relationship between him and me."

In hindsight, it sounds like a storm in a teacup

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but at the time it was enough for Lewis to bail. He left after 1994's *Vicious Circle*, replaced by a long-forgotten singer named Chris Van Dahl.

That's when things got confusing.

There's little point trying to detail how many people have passed through L.A. Guns over the years. "Oh, maybe forty," says Lewis, laughing. But the late 90s was an especially turbulent time, with musicians hopping in and out of the band like fleas on a mangy dog. Future Steel Panther frontman Ralph 'Michael Starr' Seanz briefly joined, as did Love/Hate's Jizzy Pearl, Bang Tango's Joe Lesté, Faster Pussycat guitarist Brent Muscat and even former WASP man Chris Holmes. It was less a band, more a halfway house for struggling hair-metal musicians.

"Oh, it damaged the L.A. Guns brand undoubtedly," says Guns, who kept the flag flying during the late 90s. "I talked myself into things I probably shouldn't have done. If Pavarotti had come along and offered to sing *Sex Action*, I'd have probably said, 'Yeah, you're in.'"

Not that Lewis' own solo career was in rude health. As well as taking a job as an amateur psychic, he worked as an assistant for a stage hypnotist ("I was doing the sound while he got people to pretend to be chickens"). Inevitably, the offer to reunite with his old band in 1999 was hard to resist. And that's when things got *really* confusing.

In 2002, it was Guns' turn to leave. Offered a spot in Crüe bassist's Nikki Sixx's LA supergroup Brides Of Destruction, he deserted the band he'd formed. Talking about it now, it's the only time Phil Lewis sounds annoyed.

"We'd just done a really good record together (2002's *Waking The Dead*), but he was going in a different direction," says the singer. "He was frustrated, but his timing was lousy. He chose to dump the band two weeks after the record – actually, during the photo shoot for it. Nobody's looking at each other in the photo. Everybody's pissed off."

Lewis and drummer Steve Riley announced that L.A. Guns would continue without Guns. And that's what happened, at least until 2006, when Guns decided to activate his own version of the band. Suddenly, the world had two L.A. Guns at a time when, frankly, one would have been surplus to requirements.

Today, both men sound simultaneously sheepish and obstinate about the situation they found themselves in. At the time, neither was willing to back down.

"It wasn't a difficult decision to make," says Guns carefully, "but when a band splits in two, it instantly becomes about nostalgia: 'Yeah, these guys are good, but they're not *those* guys. It came from a lot of soul-searching."

"Yeah, it seemed silly to the casual observer, but this is our livelihood," says Lewis. "He had every right to start his own version, but morally, it was not a very cool thing to do. We put out three records. I didn't get the impression that was what he wanted to do. He just wanted to go and play gigs and make money."

Given the band's tangled history, no one would have been surprised if one had picked up the phone to the other and said, 'This is ridiculous, let's get back together.' Except the phone call never happened. And it kept never happening.

Both incarnations ploughed on, convinced that they were the real thing. Guns' version didn't release anything of note, content to play sporadic live dates with various singers, while the guitarist himself moonlighted in a series of other groups. But the Lewis version of the band put out a pair of creditable studio albums, 2005's *Tales From The Strip* and 2012's *Hollywood Forever*, both of which partied like it was 1987.

Still, the singer was becoming increasingly frustrated at the band's situation, not least their non-existent work rate in the studio. He paints drummer Steve Riley as simultaneously controlling and disengaged. "Steve's one of these guys who wanted to be the band manager, the band driver, the band travel agent, he wanted to do everything. Consequently, it just seemed like he was angry and tired a lot." (*CR* reached out to Riley for a comment, but received no response).

But by the end of 2015, with no sign of a new album, Lewis decided he'd had enough. "I said, 'If we're not going to make a record and we're on these shitty festival line-ups, I'm leaving.'"

He gave a year's notice. "We didn't make a big announcement in the press – I mean, who cares?" he laughs. Phil Lewis was exiting L.A. Guns for the second time in his career. But like the old song says, you can check out – but you can never leave.

In reality, this Sunset Strip Cold War had shown signs of thawing a few years earlier. Lewis and Guns reunited briefly for a charity gig in Las Vegas in 2013. Publicly, both men remained stubbornly wedded to their own versions of L.A. Guns, but privately Lewis was rethinking his position.

"It got to the point where we'd been estranged for such a long time that it felt, like, 'Why the fuck are we still fighting?'" says Lewis with a sigh. "If you hold a grudge for that long, it's a bit like taking poison and expecting somebody else to die."

The reunion, when it came, was oddly undramatic. In May 2016, Guns and Lewis announced that they would be playing a string of gigs at the end of the year as L.A. Guns. Next to the recent reconciliation of their old muckers Slash and Axl, this was strictly small fry. But in their own way, the pair embodied the long-vanished glamour of the 80s Hollywood scene just as much as their more famous peers.

Certainly, *The Missing Peace* is way better than a record released by a bunch of glam metal veterans 30 years after their heyday has any right to be. Originally planned by Guns as a solo album, it doesn't quite erase the memory of the various indignities heaped upon the L.A. Guns name in the interim years, though razor-sharp rock'n'rollers *It's All The Same To Me* and *Speed* go some way to making reparations.

Of course, L.A. Guns being L.A. Guns, neither man is willing to bet their house on what the future holds – something past experience suggests is wise. "As long as we can keep our heads about us, this band definitely has a future," says Guns. He shuts down the suggestion that Steve Riley still has his own version of L.A. Guns with a polite but curt: "I don't think so." (He won't to be drawn into the specifics of any issues with his former drummer.)

The unpredictability of the situation suits them – this is a band who have spent the last 30 years in a permanent state of volatility, after all. But there's one question that remains unanswered: is this Phil Lewis' L.A. Guns featuring Tracii Guns, or is it Tracii Guns' L.A. Guns featuring Phil Lewis?

The guitarist grins. "It's L.A. Guns, baby."

The Missing Peace is out now via Frontiers.

***Peace* and love: Phil and Tracii, back together at last.**

DUSTIN JACK/PRESS x2

"[Steve Riley] had every right to start his own [L.A. Guns] but morally it was not a very cool thing to do."

Phil Lewis

NIGHT Owl

From folk roots to Stealers Wheel to solo success, **Gerry Rafferty** seemed to move through eras of popular music with ease. In truth, the star was struggling with fame – and his own demons.

Words: **Paul Rees**

Of all the many songs that Gerry Rafferty wrote, the one that made him famous was drawn from a thoroughly humdrum experience. For the better part of three years, Rafferty had to slog down from his native Scotland to London, so often he could trace the route with his eyes shut, to sit with a gaggle of lawyers, poring over the fine print of a potentially ruinous contract he had signed up to when he was with his old band, Stealers Wheel. The light relief in these forays were the times at the end of a day when he would meet up in the pub with his friend and fellow musician Rab Noakes and drink to their better fortune. The two men's regular London boozer was called the Globe and located at the junction of Marylebone Road and Baker Street.

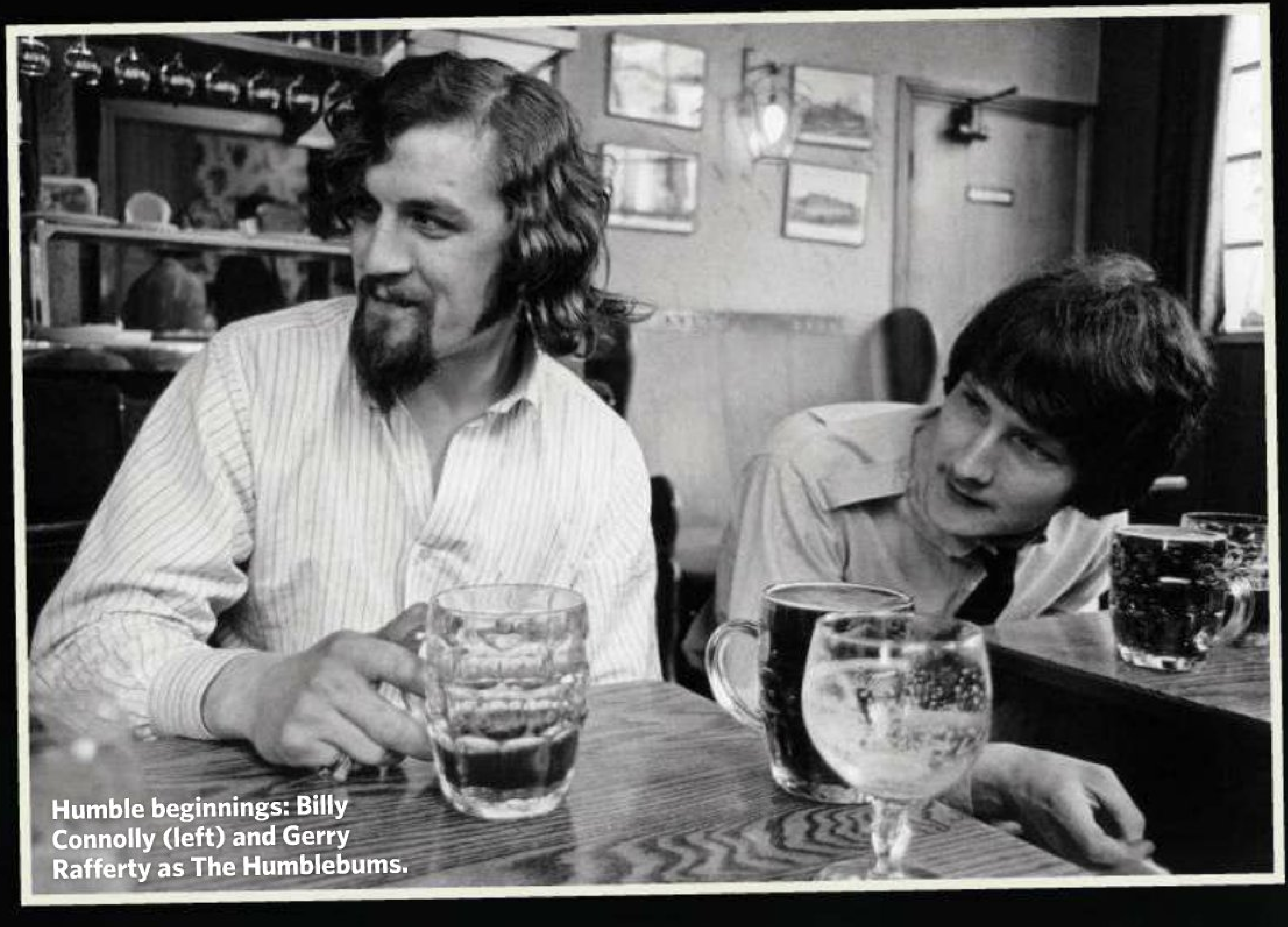
"He was a pretty erudite character," says Noakes. "One of those people, from the post-war consensus, who's bright as a button, but that didn't do all that well academically. We had some great times with long conversations into the night."

Rafferty had travelled an otherwise scenic route to this point in the mid-1970s. Beginning with beat groups in his hometown of Paisley, a satellite of Glasgow, he had been making his living playing music for going on ten years. Next he had dipped into the fertile Glaswegian folk scene, joining a colourful young local character named Billy Connolly in a duo called The Humblebums. Those had been good times, but not so as each of them didn't want for something more and on their respective terms. Connolly was a born comic, the more introverted Rafferty minded to forge a different path. In 1971, he split from Connolly and made an accomplished solo album, *Can I Have My Money Back?* that got good reviews, but hardly sold.

Back to the bosom of a group he went, forming Stealers Wheel with an old running mate from Paisley, Joe Egan. This time success was huge and instant, a smash American hit with a song Rafferty had meant as a parody of Bob Dylan, *Stuck In The Middle With You*. Soon enough, though, things turned sour for Stealers Wheel. After the hit had proved a one-off, their management company filed for bankruptcy, leaving the band's royalties unpaid and Rafferty and Egan in a state of contractual limbo, each restricted from writing or performing. Rafferty fled home to Scotland to lick his wounds and settle to the grinding routine of an attritional legal battle.

Determined ever after to be his own man and at all events, Rafferty set himself to writing songs for a second solo record. He taped them onto a four-track Teac recorder in the various houses he rented through the period in Clydebank, Skelmorlie and Kilmacolm, road-testing them on drives into Glasgow with wife Carla and their young daughter Martha aboard the family's small Honda Civic. Listening to his own songs would always seem to comfort Rafferty, soothe whatever might be hounding him. Punk was rampaging out of London's pubs and clubs and Rafferty's intricately detailed songs flew in the face of the prevailing winds, but he didn't for a second doubt their worth.

The title of the album he eventually cut was also derived from his protracted spell commuting – *City To City*. A Beatles nut, he fixated on strong melodies and the ten featured songs had that much in abundance. Rafferty was also blessed to be able to sing them in a voice that had both McCartney's sweeter registers and Lennon's raw passion. *Baker Street* was one of the last songs he wrote for the record and just as his contractual dispute was being settled. That much seeped into the optimistic last lines of the song: *'And when you wake up, it's* ▷



Humble beginnings: Billy Connolly (left) and Gerry Rafferty as The Humblebums.

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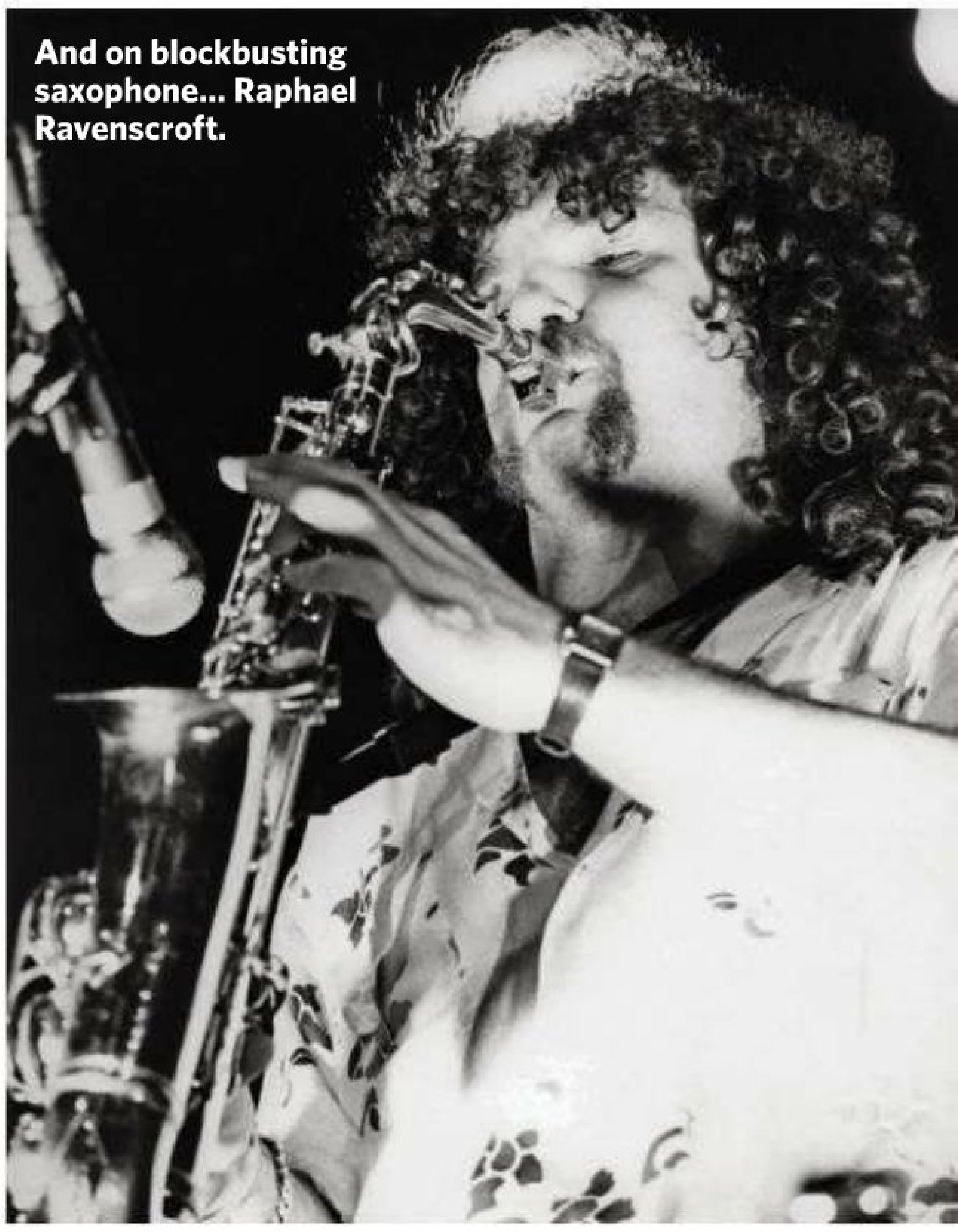
"HE WAS A TITAN, A GIANT. HE COULD HAVE BEEN AS FAMOUS AS ANY SONGWRITER IN THE WORLD, BUT CHOSE NOT TO BE."

Barbara Dickson

Stealers Wheel, 1973, with Joe Egan (far left) plus Gerry Rafferty (far right). Stuck in the middle: Rab Noakes, Tony Williams, Rod Coombes.



And on blockbusting saxophone… Raphael Ravenscroft.

a new morning/The sun is shining it's a new morning/ And you're going, you're going home.' These were given wings by the album's most distinctive melody line and which burst up throughout the song. Rafferty had originally written it for guitar, but when that didn't soar – and at producer Hugh Murphy's prompting – he summoned an unheralded session player, Raphael Ravenscroft to the studio to put it down instead on sax.

Initially, Rafferty's new label, United Artists were set against releasing *Baker Street* as the album's lead-off single. Rafferty and Murphy practically had to beg them to put it out, but once they did on February 3, 1978, the song took off like Ravenscroft's spiralling saxophone. *Baker Street* rose to Number Three on the UK chart, went one higher in the US and won Rafferty two Ivor Novello awards. He got a telegram from McCartney congratulating him on "an incredible song". Off the back of it, *City To City* sold five and a half million copies and knocked the Bee Gees' until then all-conquering *Saturday Night Fever* soundtrack from the top of the *Billboard* chart in the States. The insular Rafferty wryly noted how he had become an overnight sensation from doing what he had for a decade. Altogether, no aspect of his life would ever again be the same.

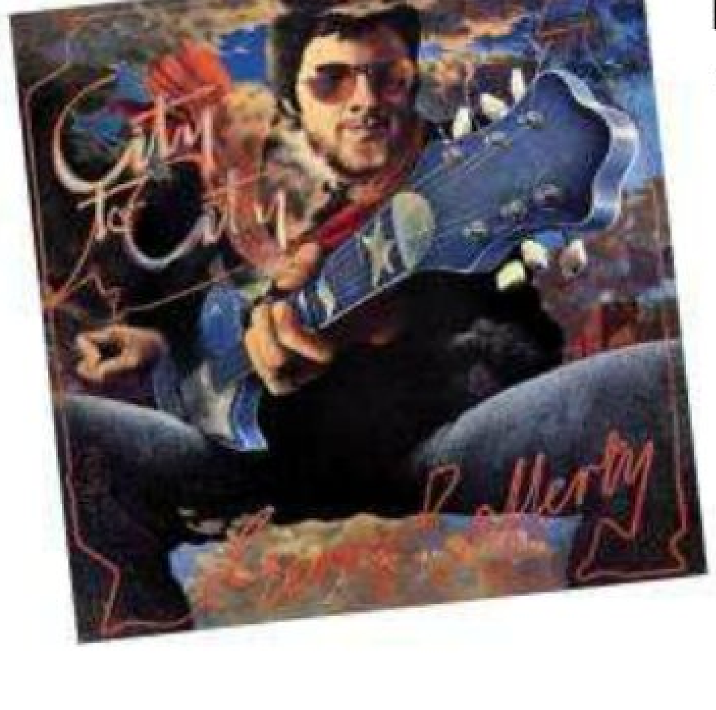
"I don't believe he had any particular expectations that he would have such enormous successes commercially," says Michael Grey, head of press at United Artists when *City To City* was released and who Rafferty brought in as his manager. "The album had sold more than four million and he didn't even have a manager. Mad promoters from Utah would be ringing him in the middle of the night and demanding that he tour. He wasn't in need of a Svengali. Quite the opposite, he needed someone to more or less answer the phone. From my side of things, the main problem was that basically he wanted me to say no to everything.

"BILLY WAS A RAGING EXTROVERT AND I WAS THE SENSITIVE SINGER-SONGWRITER."

Gerry Rafferty on sometime music partner Billy Connolly

"I liked him straight away. He was very guarded, but I could understand that. I had seen many sides of the record business by then. He was very sure of his own talent and equally suspicious of how it would be exploited."

"When *Baker Street* became the hit that it was, adults changed towards me," recalls Martha Rafferty. "They smiled more, gave me bigger portions of food at school lunches, and I remember feeling how fake and phony people became. Children see things as they really are."



The sound of *Baker Street* would become as emblematic of the era as any of Queen's excursions into mock-opera, the Eagles' sun-blushed harmonies, the Bee Gees' stratospheric disco or Johnny Rotten sneering *'God save the Queen'*. In 2003, Rafferty was quoted as estimating that the song was still earning him £80,000 a year. The actual the actual figure, however was much higher. It never went away, but neither was Rafferty able to get out from under the looming shadow the song cast, or seem to escape the demons in him it appeared to amplify. When he died on January 4, 2011, aged sixty-three, his work had made him a millionaire, but the considerable due he merited as a songwriter of rare craft and intuitive skill had largely eluded him.

"He was a titan, a giant," opines Barbara Dickson, who sung with Rafferty in Glasgow's folk clubs and contributed backing vocals to *City To City*. "He could have been as famous as any songwriter in the world, but chose not to be. One thing I do know is that James Taylor wrote Gerry a fan letter about another song on *City To City*, *Whatever's Written In Your Heart*. I rest my case."

The town where Gerald Rafferty arrived into the world on 16 April 1947 is six miles from Glasgow, but prides itself on being apart from the city. Rafferty's friend, the painter and playwright John Byrne, describes the two places as being as different as chalk and cheese, suggesting Glasgow more generally breeds stand-up comics and Paisley oddballs. Rafferty was the youngest of three sons born to Joseph and Mary Rafferty. Fairly typically of Paisley at the time, they were a working class family. Rafferty grew up in a ground-floor tenement on one of the town's sprawling council estates.

His father was of Irish stock, a lorry driver by trade and a heavy drinker. Writing Rafferty's obituary for *The Guardian*, Michael Grey claimed that Mary Rafferty would regularly whisk her youngest son from the house on a Saturday night and so as to be out of harm's way when Joseph got home drunk. Joseph Rafferty died when Gerry was

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just sixteen, but if he bequeathed anything to his last-born son it was an affinity for songs in the Irish and Scottish folk tradition. From knee high, Rafferty would sing these standards, three-part harmonising with his elder siblings, Jim and Joe.

At eleven, he started to play. Jim Rafferty worked with John Byrne as a 'slab boy' in a poky back room at the local Stoddard's carpet factory, grinding up coloured powder for the carpet designers. Byrne would later write his trilogy of famous plays *The Slab Boys* about this experience. The future playwright would take a three-string banjo with him into work, hanging it under a dust coat behind the door.

"Jim and I became pals and spent a number of evenings at each other's houses," takes up Byrne. "One day, Jim asked if it was okay for him to borrow the banjo. He said his little brother wanted to teach himself a Cliff Richard tune. Gerry was very quiet, very shy. I spent a year in the slab room before getting a place at Glasgow School of Art, and didn't see much of him until some years later when I was married and he was playing in a band."

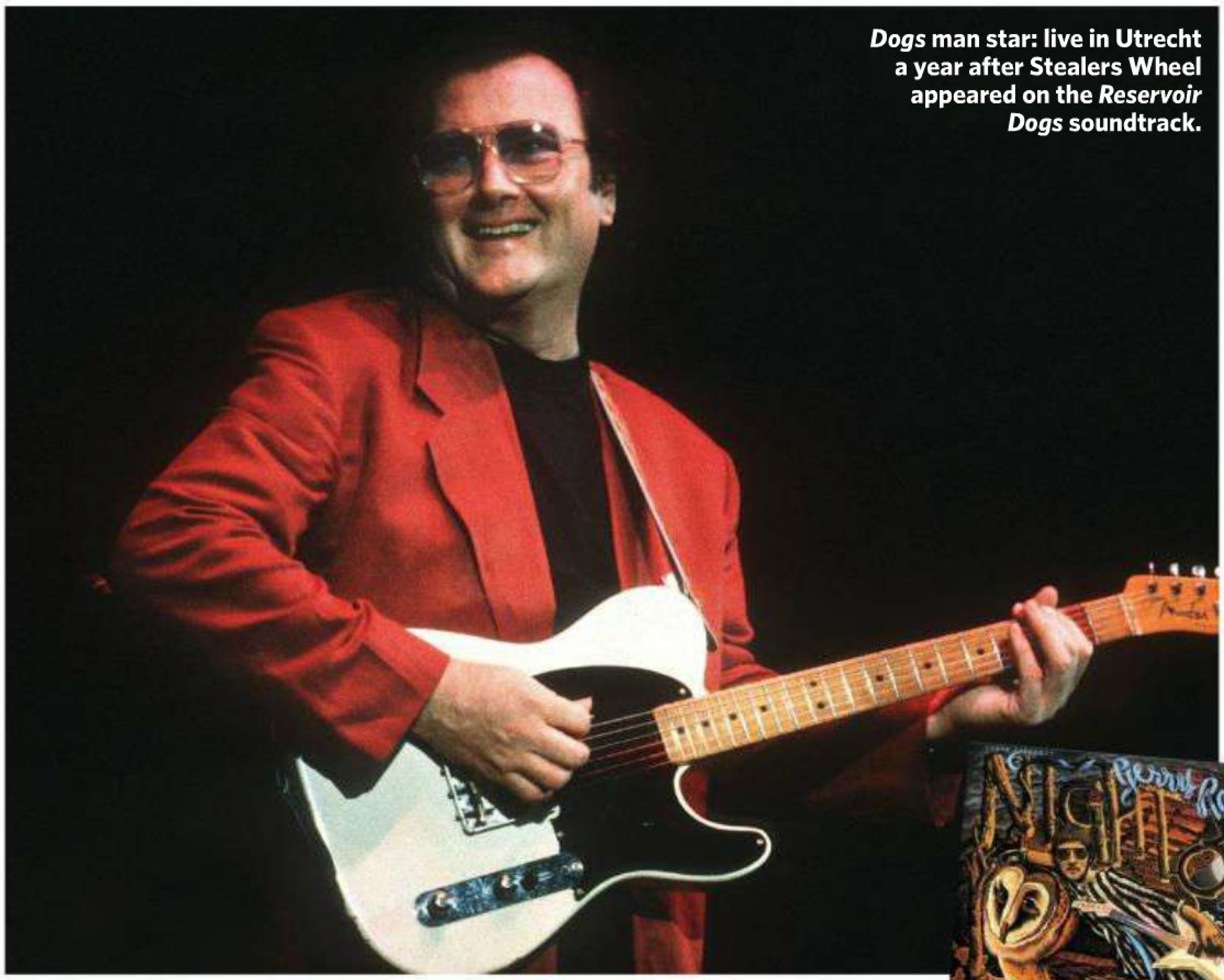
Upon leaving St Mirin's Academy school at fifteen, Rafferty had gone to work as a butcher and then in a shoe shop. By then, the Beatles had already begun to change the world and Rafferty, like countless other British teenagers, was intoxicated by the very idea of having a band of his own. The first that he joined was the Mavericks, through which he met Egan, who was nominated by the fledgling group as lead singer, and together they bashed out Beatles and Stones covers around the local dancehall circuit on weekends.

Further inspired by the example of Lennon and McCartney, Rafferty and Egan began to write their own, mop-top-styled songs. As his muse, Rafferty had Carla Ventilla. Dark-haired, pretty and fifteen-years-old, Carla was from an Italian family and worked as an apprentice at her father's hairdressing salon in nearby Clydebank. The two of them had met at a dance and after which became inseparable, much to her father Tony Ventilla's disgust.

"To Tony, Gerry was a total ne'er do well," says John Byrne. "He wasn't at all happy when Gerry started to go steady with Carla. For a few months, Carla had to come to lodge with me and my then wife, Alice and we saw a great deal of the two of them."

From the Mavericks, Rafferty and Egan progressed to another beat group – a quintet, the Fifth Column – so as to be able to play their own songs. They got as far as landing a deal with Columbia Records and in 1966 cut a Rafferty-Egan original, *Benjamin Day*. More Byrds-influenced with its jangly guitar line and whimsical sense of psychedelia, it was released by the label as a single but flopped. Rafferty struck out on his own, casting back to the folk songs of his childhood for renewed inspiration. Fortuitously, it wasn't long before he got introduced to Billy Connolly at Paisley's Orange Hall, where the latter was playing with partner Tam Harvey as the nascent Humblebums. Native to Partick, Glasgow, Connolly already had a notably larger-than-life personality. In this respect, he was entirely opposite to Rafferty.

"HE MADE RECORDS BECAUSE HE HAD TO. HE WAS DRIVEN TO CREATE."
Martha Rafferty



***Dogs* man star: live in Utrecht a year after Stealers Wheel appeared on the *Reservoir Dogs* soundtrack.**

"He was a raging extrovert and I was the sensitive singer-songwriter," Rafferty told BBC Radio Scotland in 2003. "Yet we each shared a sense of the absurd and a way of looking at life, so that we did a lot of laughing. That night, we went back to a mutual friend's place and where I played Billy quite a few of my songs, which he thought wonderful."

Barbara Dickson was similarly bowled over by Rafferty's blossoming as a songwriter. Then making her way as a young folk singer, Dickson happened across Rafferty performing solo one night at Glasgow's Scotia Bar, a wood-beamed, River Clyde-side Mecca for the local folkies.

"I remember being completely transfixed by him," she says. "It was very rare for me to feel that way, but he was fantastic. Somebody told me he was a mate of Billy Connolly's. We started to hang out together. Gerry was a huge personality and a big man. He had a laugh like a machine gun and a fantastically infectious smile. He was wonderfully expansive in his gestures, yet terribly shy which made him devastatingly attractive of course.

"I wasn't the only person to discover Gerry at that time. Hundreds of other people were listening to him around Glasgow, but it was a seminal moment in my life and not just in music."

Connolly, who says Dickson thought Rafferty "the best thing since sliced bread," didn't waste time in inviting his new friend to join the Humblebums. Though Harvey left soon after, Connolly and Rafferty would remain partners for the next couple of years. They toured the country, their act a simple, but effective one, with Connolly telling jokes in between Rafferty's songs. They also made a brace of likeable albums together, 1969's *The New Humblebums* and the next year's *Open Up The Door*. Rafferty reflected later that the time he spent with Connolly was the most he ever enjoyed being on the road. "We travelled light – just an acoustic guitar and a banjo," he said. "And for a concert I suppose we got £100, which was cash-in-hand."

"I was asked by Gerry and Billy to do an illustration for the cover of *The New Humblebums*," says Byrne, who would go on to provide the artwork for all the Stealers Wheel albums, and both *City To City* and Rafferty's follow-up to that album, *Night Owl*. "At that time, Alice and me, Gerry and Carla were very fond of dining together at the Rogano, a long-established, Art Deco seafood restaurant in Glasgow. We would eat, talk, laugh and drink the entire night away and with instructions from the staff to pull the door closed behind us when we quit the joint and which would be as the sun was coming up next morning."

Eventually, and as Rafferty related it, Connolly's jokes got to be longer, the time allocated to his songs exponentially shorter, and inevitably the two men broke apart. Rafferty's subsequent first solo album might not have won him a bigger audience, but with it he forged a solid bond with Hugh Murphy, then employed as staff producer for his label, Transatlantic. It would be six years before the pair of them next worked together and after which Rafferty had enjoyed and then endured his initial taste of fame.

By 1972, Rafferty had moved his family to Tunbridge Wells in Kent. It was to there that he gathered about him the musicians who would make up the first line-up of Stealers Wheel. Joe Egan also moved down south from Paisley; Roger Brown, an American who'd been a member of the Humblebums backing band, joined him, as did Rab Noakes who Rafferty had become acquainted with on the Glasgow folk circuit. Rafferty had a piano set up in the front room, around which he and Egan would write songs. ▷

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"HE WENT THROUGH HELL AND ARRIVED AT HIS FINAL DESTINATION WITH A SENSE OF PEACE AND FULFILMENT, BUT WHAT A JOURNEY!"
John Byrne

"He didn't trust anyone in the music business." One of Rafferty's last photo-shoots, February 14, 2003.

"That was a tremendously fertile period," explains Noakes. "The house was full of songs the whole time, morning, noon and night. Someone would pick up a guitar and start singing and other people would join in. You wouldn't call Gerry the leader of it, but it was his vision that brought the whole thing together.

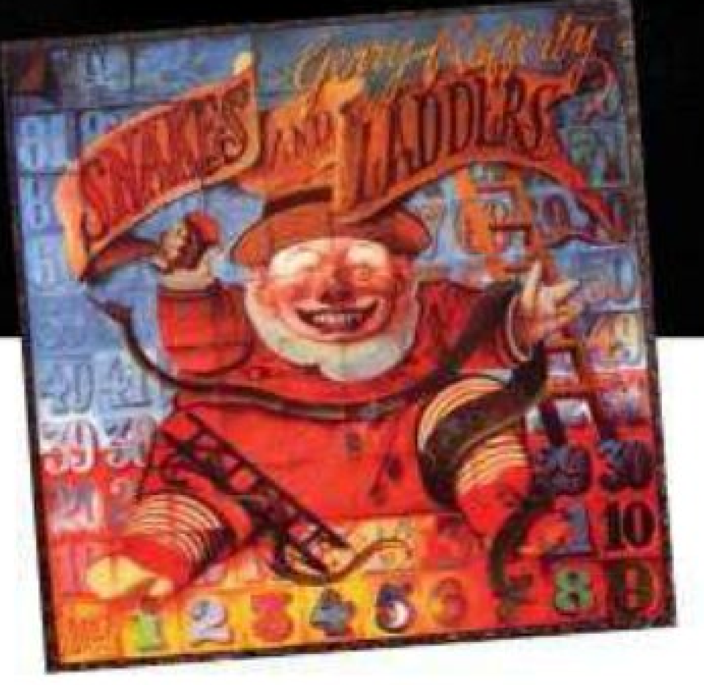
"Gerry and I did a flurry of shows around the area in the summer of 1971. It was a two-voices-and-guitar kind of thing. He's probably the person that I've loved singing along with more than anyone else. Yes, he was complex, but also deep, thoughtful and highly creative. He had a large degree of self-determination. Some people can find that kind of focus a wee bit difficult to deal with, but to me it was hugely inspirational."

Not that this state of creative bonhomie was made to last. After the band were signed to A&M, the label insisted upon drafting in new musicians to work around Rafferty and Egan and also paired them with veteran producers Jerry Leiber and Mike Stoller, famed for their association with Elvis Presley. The revered duo's working partnership with Stealers Wheel was not nearly so well defined. In particular, Rafferty was unsettled by Leiber's and Stoller's strictly old-school approach to making records.

"I think he viewed us as the enemy," Stoller observed years later. "There was something very distasteful to him about us, what we represented to him, crassly commercial, what have you. Gerry was difficult to work with from the get-go."

Nonetheless, propelled by *Stuck In The Middle With You*, Stealers Wheel's debut proved to be both a creative and commercial success. The band was made to tour relentlessly behind it, prompting Rafferty to quit, claiming later that he had been on the edge of a nervous breakdown. He was persuaded to return to make 1974's *Ferguslie Park* album, named after a notorious Paisley estate. With nine musicians backing Rafferty and Egan, it was lush and extravagant, but didn't sell. A third album, *Right Or Wrong*, followed in 1975, but by that point Stealers Wheel was already over, broken on the wheel of their own internal bickering and the collapse of their management. The whole experience coloured Rafferty for the rest of his days.

"He was obsessed with keeping control," opines Barbara Dickson. "And he didn't trust anybody in the music business. By definition, if they were in the business they were a bunch of shits and he thought they were going to feck him over. His work and his world were very precious to him. Also, he saw himself as a serious writer, which indeed he was, but being a pop star is a Faustian pact. You cannot start dictating the terms two years into it."



A pop star was just what *Baker Street* and *City To City* turned Rafferty into. A year later and also with Hugh Murphy, he produced a second hit album, *Night Owl*, which with its title track and *Get It Right Next Time* matched the mercurial Steely Dan for sophisticated pop perfection. Rafferty himself was not so clear cut. In some respects he pushed against the tide, most obviously in refusing all entreaties to tour behind either record in the US. On the other hand, he fully enjoyed the fruits of his success. He bought a rambling farmhouse and three-hundred acres of land in rural Kent and a grand Queen Anne house in London's upmarket Hampstead. Required on one occasion to travel to America, he flew by Concorde.

"He liked having money and status, and why shouldn't he have done?" considers Barbara Dickson. "He had an image of himself being almost like an American rock star and that was okay. He was always well off and drove nice cars, and coming from a very humble upbringing he felt that was an achievement I'm sure."

"Sometimes he would want to sit in the bar at the airport, miss his flight and just get on another a couple of hours later," furthers Michael Grey.

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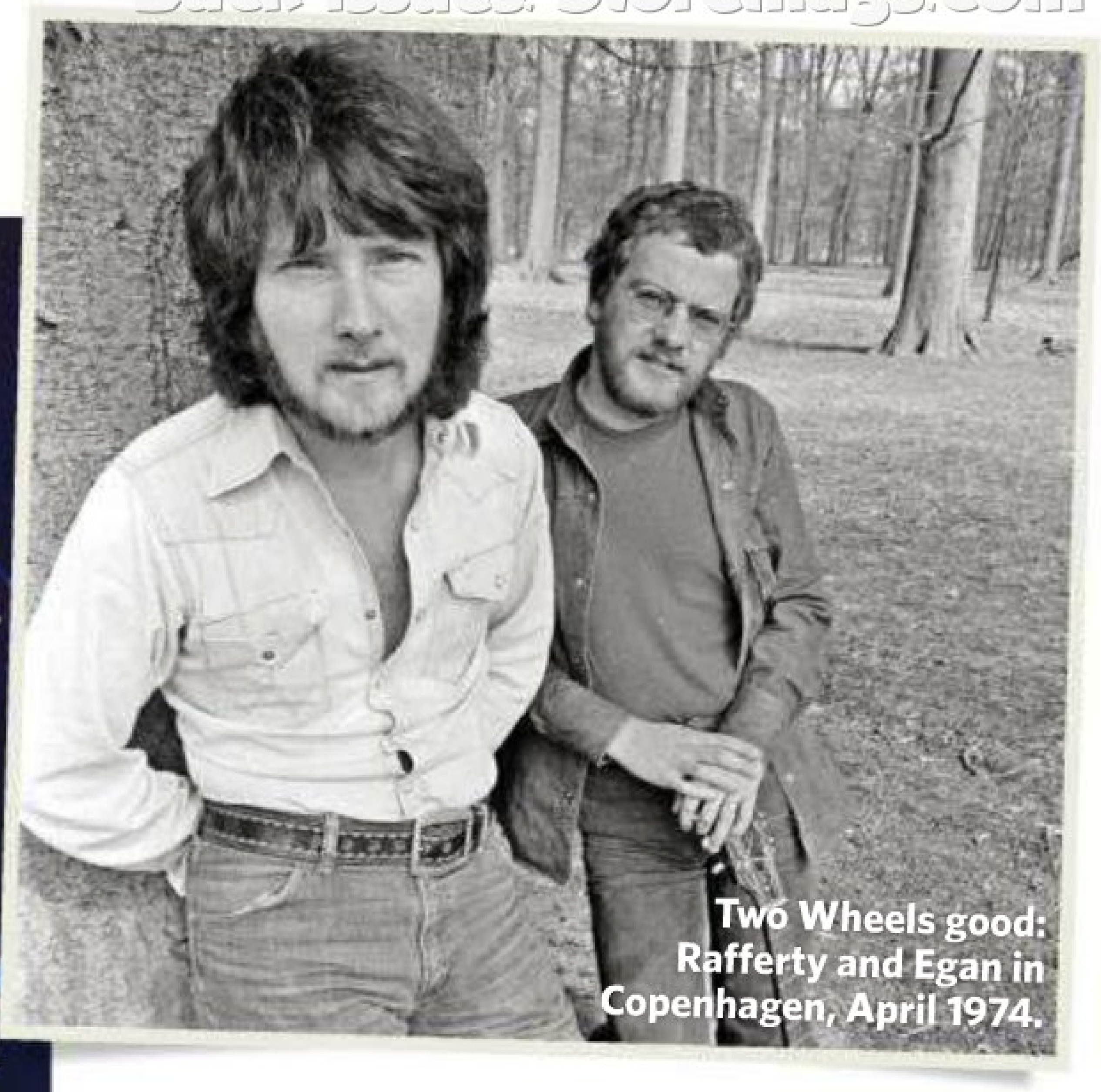

Two Wheels good: Rafferty and Egan in Copenhagen, April 1974.

Martha Rafferty and Rab Noakes perform at a tribute to Gerry during Celtic Connections, Glasgow 2012.

"That's the main thing I feel bad about, although I'm not sure what I could have done really. When he would say, 'Oh, let's not go to the gate for this one, let have another drink,' it never occurred to me that he was on the road to becoming an alcoholic. Everybody drank and took drugs in those days, but Gerry wasn't nearly such a nice man when he'd had a certain amount of whisky."

Of Rafferty's golden period, there were a couple more fine records – 1980's *Snakes And Ladders* and *Sleepwalking* in 1982 – and then six years of silence. He had a studio built at his Kent farmstead and continued to make music, but otherwise spent the time away travelling in Europe and America, and also, according to Martha Rafferty, being engaged on a more personal quest.

"His real journey was an inner spiritual one," she says. "He wanted to understand why we were here. I don't think he felt as if he was shutting himself off from anything of great value. He was disillusioned with the commercial aspect of making music to sell product. He made records because he had to. He was driven to create; it's what helped him put his inner world back in order."

> "IT NEVER OCCURRED TO ME THAT HE WAS ON THE ROAD TO BEING ALCHOHOLIC."
> *Mike Grey, PR*

Towards the end of the decade, Rafferty did come back. With Hugh Murphy, he co-produced one last hit, *Letter From America* for Scots duo the Proclaimers. In 1988, there was also a new solo album, *North And South*, a more low-key, introspective echo of former glories, but it was met with some scathing reviews. His drinking had escalated too, to the degree that it became debilitating and damaging. In 1990, his beloved Carla left him. There were other punishing blows to his psyche. His brother Joe died in 1995, then Hugh Murphy in 1998, each devastating him and appearing to hasten his own decline.

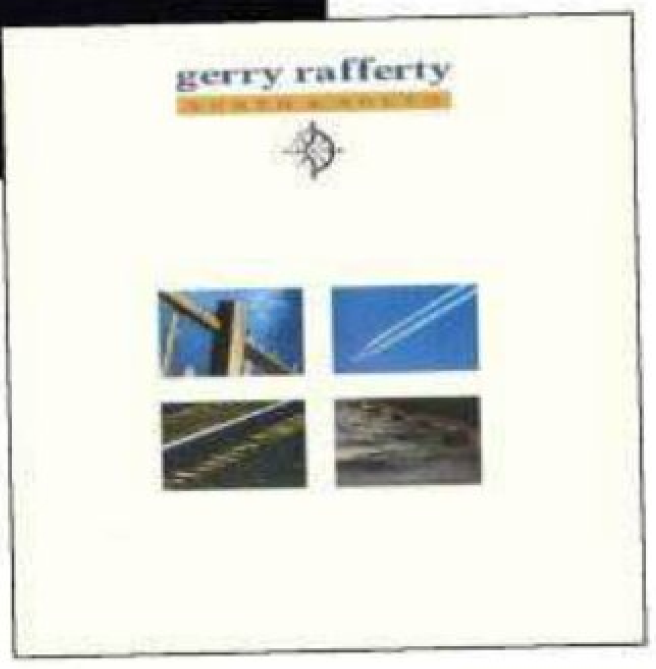
"Carla loved him till the day he died and he loved her, but she couldn't believe what happened to him," says Barbara Dickson. "There was nothing anybody could do for Gerry. Carla was the closest person in the world to him and she wasn't able to help. Alcoholism is a terrible sickness."

There were just occasional records after that, three in all. Intermittently on each Rafferty's wondrous grasp of melody could still be heard, almost like a reflective spasm. He was even indirectly returned to the spotlight in 1992 and when Quentin Tarantino chose his old Stealers Wheel hit to soundtrack the infamous ear-slicing scene in his searing crime caper, *Reservoir Dogs*. Rafferty didn't bother to watch the film until nearly twenty years later.

He went with Martha to live in California for several years, for a spell joining a group devoted to the teachings of Russian-born philosopher and spiritualist George Gurdjieff. He could not stop drinking, though. Back in the UK in November 2010, he was rushed into hospital in Bournemouth suffering from multiple organ failure and put on life support. He was not expected to make it through the night, but rallied enough to be able to spend that Christmas with Martha and his grand-daughter at their home in Stroud, Gloucestershire. It was to be his last Christmas.

"He was dying and we both knew it, and it was okay," says Martha. "During that time, we both made peace on many levels. When my mum left, Dad was dependent on me to function. I did my best to hold things together, but it was very difficult and he lent on me heavily, psychologically and emotionally. His journey to death was the most profound thing I've ever witnessed."

"I was living in Edinburgh and heard from Martha that her dad was very poorly," remembers John Byrne. "I got on a train to Stroud and picked up a taxi which skidded its way in pitch blackness to where Gerry was living with Martha. There, in the middle of nowhere, Gerald and I blethered, laughed and shot the breeze for a good five or six hours' non-stop. He was perfectly coherent and ready to quit this world for the next.



"Two days later, Martha texted to say her dad had slipped peacefully away. He was a genius and dear friend who left a priceless gift of wonderful songs to all of us. He went through Hell and arrived at his final destination with a sense of peace and fulfilment, but what a journey!"

A requiem mass for Gerry Rafferty was held at St Mirin's Cathedral, Paisley on January 21, 2011. John Byrne gave the eulogy before four-hundred mourners and among them the then-First Minister of Scotland, Alex Salmond. That same month, Celtic Connections in Glasgow hosted a remembrance concert, at which Noakes, Dickson, the Proclaimers and Jack Bruce played. The following November, his hometown paid a still more lasting tribute, naming a street in the Shortroods area Gerry Rafferty Drive.

Outside of Scotland – and same as it ever was – it's the sound of that resigned vocal and eruptive saxophone that still now most readily brings Gerry Rafferty to mind. Better, more representative songs would be *Shipyard Town* from *North And South* – a rousing version of which Jack Bruce performed at that Glasgow concert – the stately *The Right Moment*, or any of the other deep, soulful songs on which the big bear of a man from north of the border with the aching voice and too-wounded heart bared himself.

"For me, he's the greatest ever Scottish songwriter," maintains Barbara Dickson, who released her own tribute album to Rafferty in 2013. "It was an honour and a privilege to have even known and been close to him in any way. When he died, I cried and cried, but whenever now I get sad about him not being here, I say to myself that it's better to have had a part of him than not to have had him at all."

"I will be forever in debt to what Dad gave me," Martha Rafferty concludes. "There were so many indescribable experiences. Every day was a journey in itself and I'm still recovering from the impact those years had on me."

Stealers Wheel: The A&M Years is out now via Caroline International

GETTY

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO

NIKKI SIXX

"I didn't feel I had anything to live for," says the ex-Mötley Crüe bassist on his dark days of drug addiction, decadence and excess. Now clean, sober and happy, he's planning a *Heroin Diaries* musical.

Interview: **Dave Everley**

Nikki Sixx might not have written the Guide To Rock'N'Roll Debauchery, but he's lived several of its chapters. As the bassist, songwriter and leader of Mötley Crüe, he spent a large chunk of the 1980s in a haze of heroin and booze. That the band managed to sell millions of albums despite the abuse they inflicted on themselves is remarkable, though not as remarkable as the fact that they all survived the decade relatively unscathed.

Sixx's unstinting excess and subsequent recovery have been documented in the iconic Crüe biography *The Dirt*, as well as his own memoirs, *The Heroin Diaries*, based on journals he kept through the 80s and 90s and recently updated for a tenth anniversary edition. Today, he's clean, sober and happily married to wife number three, model Courtney Sixx. And while he's emphatic that Mötley Crüe are part of his past, the 58-year-old isn't hanging up his biker boots just yet – his next project is a stage musical version of *The Heroin Diaries*.

YOU CAN CREATE YOUR OWN DESTINY

In the late 70s, me and a guy named Lizzie Grey started a band called London. I wanted us to be less like Mott The Hoople and T.Rex, more like the Pistols and Sabbath – I wanted it to have some teeth. But at some point I decided to leave the band. I told Lizzie, and we were both really bummed because we were best friends. I remember going home and thinking, 'What have I done?' I had a plan – Mötley Crüe – but I didn't know it was going to happen. So we did the only thing we could. We made it happen.

ALL THE GREAT ROCK'N'ROLL BANDS ARE A GANG

Mötley Crüe were a gang, one hundred per cent. And gangs can turn on themselves. Power struggles, misunderstandings, built-up youthful anger, angst. All that great stuff that we love. That was rock'n'roll.

NEVER TAKE 'NO' FOR AN ANSWER

In Mötley Crüe, everybody said 'no' to us about everything. The way we looked, the way we sounded, our ideas, what we did live. It was: 'No, no, no.' That just made us more determined. If Tommy had a crazy idea, I'd be, like, 'Let's fucking go for it!' That's something I love about being in a dysfunctional fucking heavy metal band.

FRIENDSHIP IS WORTH FIGHTING FOR. EVEN IF IT'S YOUR FRIENDS YOU'RE FIGHTING

This is a true story: we went out one night, Tommy and me and Vince, and Tommy and Vince started fighting like they always used to. I was between them trying split it up, going, "Come on guys!' And this guy comes up and he's like, 'Fuck you guys, you look like a bunch of faggots.' And Tommy, Vince and me all turned and jumped on the guy and beat the shit out of him. And then the two of them turned back around and finished fighting with each other. Then afterwards everybody started laughing and we went and did shots of whiskey. It's that shit that you look back on and go, 'Man, it was great.'

LOOK OUT FOR THE QUIET ONES

Mick Mars was definitely a lot more chilled than the rest of us. He was a little bit older, had a bit more life experience. But don't let Mick Mars fool you, let me tell you. He had his fair share of debauchery. But that's a conversation you'll have to have with Mick.

YOU CAN BE BORN AN ADDICT

I sometimes wonder if I hadn't been successful, would I have gone over that line as a drug addict? Would I have gone as far as I did? I come from a family with those characteristics, and you see how addictions are carried on. You can't put it to the test, but the chances are that I probably would have been.

"As sick as it sounds, the diaries were the only person I could talk to that really understood how I felt."

THE ROMANCE OF DRUGS IS AN ILLUSION

I never had a deathwish back when I was taking drugs. But I didn't think I was indestructible either. I just didn't care. I honestly believe I was depressed. I didn't feel I had anything to live for. I remember being so out of my mind on drugs, I thought, 'I'm just gonna kill myself.' But there's a difference between having a suicidal thought and acting on it. When that dark thing pops up in your head, you either bat it away or randomly just act on it. The fact I was so messed up and never acted on those thoughts is pretty mindblowing. I eventually got on anti-depressants, which helped turn my life around.

THE PAST IS A GREAT PLACE TO VISIT. BUT I WOULDN'T WANT TO LIVE THERE

I always kept diaries throughout everything – in journals, on scraps of paper, anywhere. As sick as it sounds, the diaries were the only person I could talk to that really understood how it felt. I recently updated *The Heroin Diaries* with an extra hundred pages. From this point I can see myself growing up, and also as a grown up looking back on it. It reminded me how dark and repetitive my life was back then: wake up, do drugs, pass out, wake up, do drugs pass out. It's a beautiful reminder of a horrible time. I quit journaling the way I used to, which was three or four times a day, a couple of years ago. It might be cos my life is fucking boring these days. ▷

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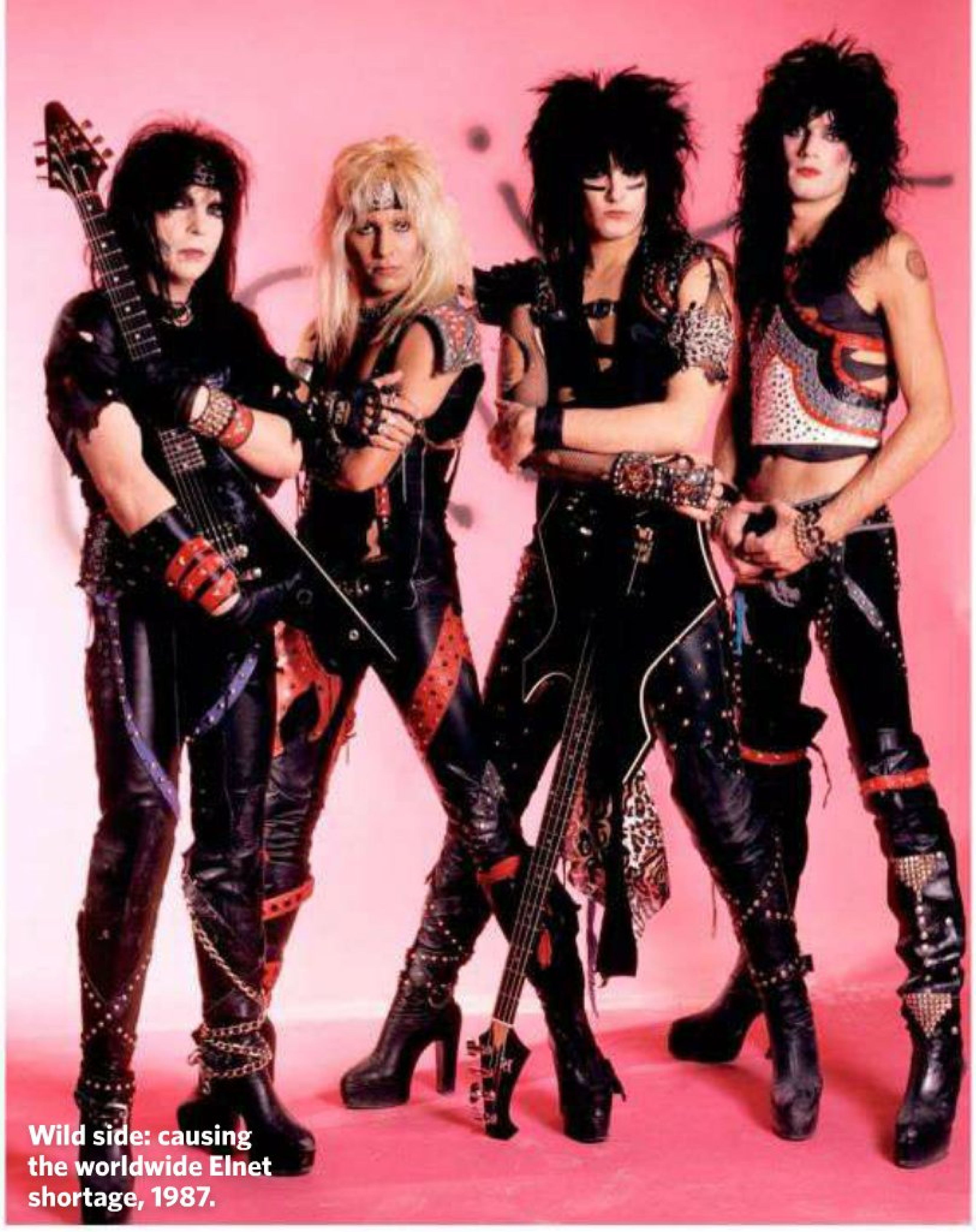
Show's over: Crüe sign their Cessation Of Touring agreement, 2014.


Wild side: causing the worldwide Elnet shortage, 1987.

MYTH-MAKING IS FINE, BUT NEVER FORGET THE MUSIC

When *Hammer Of The Gods* came out, it was, like, 'Oh god, did this really happen?' All the folklore and things that happened around Led Zeppelin started to merge with the music and the musicianship. That's not to say that those things didn't happen to us, but people overlook the important things: all those melody lines, the choruses, the guitar and drums parts, the vocal arrangements, the lyrics. There's been frustration at times because of that.

ROCK STARS SHOULDN'T ACT

I'm speaking for myself here. I remember a couple of times in our videos, the director would say: 'Okay, act like there's a lion flying out of the ceiling.' I can't do that. I'm a bass player.

WHORING YOURSELF OUT IS NEVER WORTH IT

I never want to do things just to put my name on them. You'll never see Nikki Sixx's burger restaurant. The only reason there'd be a burger restaurant is if I was so into burgers that that's all I could imagine doing. And I can't imagine that.

YOU'RE EITHER A HELICOPTER OR A TANK

I have a theory that there are two kinds of people. You have tanks. Tanks are on the ground, driving around blowing shit up, making a lot of noise. But you eventually run off a cliff cos you can't see where you're going because you're in a goddamn tank. Helicopters are up above everything, you can see everybody, you have a clear vision, you can take care of business. Some musicians don't have the ability to be a helicopter, the ones that do who are able to elevate their art and their craft and evolve. Me? I'm a helicopter missing a rudder. The tanks are gonna blow me up eventually.

FAMILIES HAVE A LOT TO ANSWER FOR

I believe that when I was very young, there was some sort of cord cut between me and my mom and my dad. There was always something missing. It's like having a hole in your stomach that you can't fill up. My father left us when I was a kid. When got a little older I was, like, 'How can you have left me behind? I'm going to show you!' I really let him know – we sold a hundred and fifty million records, we did a lot of cool shit. And you know what, it didn't fill that hole in my stomach.

SOMETIMES YOU JUST HAVE TO GET OVER SHIT

My dad died many years ago. What I would say to him now is, 'I don't know you, so I'm not going to judge you.' I have no idea what it was like for him and my mom in the 50s and 60s, trying to survive. My mom wasn't the easiest character to get along with. I used to blame him, now I'm just like, 'I wish I had a relationship with him.' I'm not going to walk around for the rest of my life feeling depressed. My dad left, my mom left, I was a fucking junkie, I've been divorced twice. Now I'm married to my very best friend, for the first time since I was very young I'm not in a band, I have a nice life. I'm in a place I've never been in my life. The point is, you've just got to fucking move on.

MUSIC IS THE DRUG I KEEP GOING BACK TO

Music has been the one constant love throughout my life. I was watching this documentary on *Rolling Stone* magazine, and Ike and Tina Turner were performing *Come Together*, the Beatles song. And the bass part starts, then the struggle between that and the kick and the snare. And the guitar starts and Tina comes in with those vocals. And I went, 'There it fucking is, man.' I don't care what genre it is – thrash metal, pop, disco, R&B. You get a musician up there who is real and primal, it's the greatest thing. It's like sex. It's so fucking beautiful.

"I wish I had a relationship with my dad. But I'm not going to walk around for the rest of my life depressed."

DON'T LET TIME SLOW YOU DOWN

I'm in my 50s, but I've still got plenty to do and plenty of time to do it in. I'm curious to see where my brain will take me creatively. I've quit the radio show I do, Sixx Sense, but I'm writing another book. It won't be another tell-all, even though it's fun to hear musicians bitching about each other. I'm working on the movie version of *The Dirt* with Netflix – we've got a killer script. And we're working on the Broadway version of *The Heroin Diaries*, which will be phenomenal. It definitely won't be Rock Of Ages: The Smack Years. But I don't see a tour bus in my life right now. I have an opportunity to create something that's even bigger than rock'n'roll.

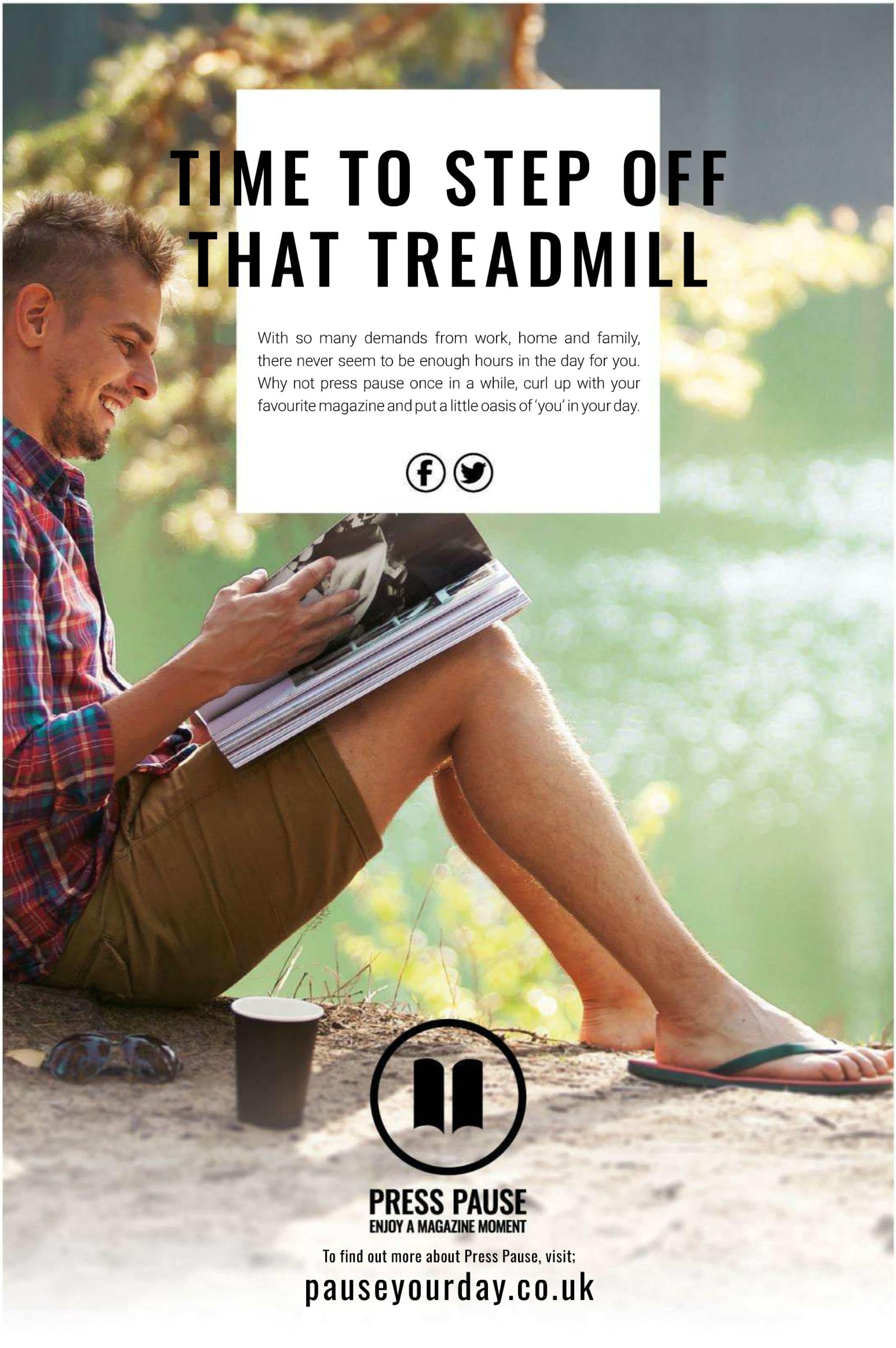
"That's two ice creams please!" Nikki in Sixx A.M. with James Michael.

I'D MAKE A GOOD TALK SHOW HOST

That's the one big ambition I've got left. I'd love to do my own talk show, interview people. Hopefully the hologram thing will be happening, cos there's a lot of dead guys I want to talk to.

The Heroin Diaries Tenth Anniversary Edition is out now.

GETTY x2; SIXX A.M. LIVE: KEVIN NIXON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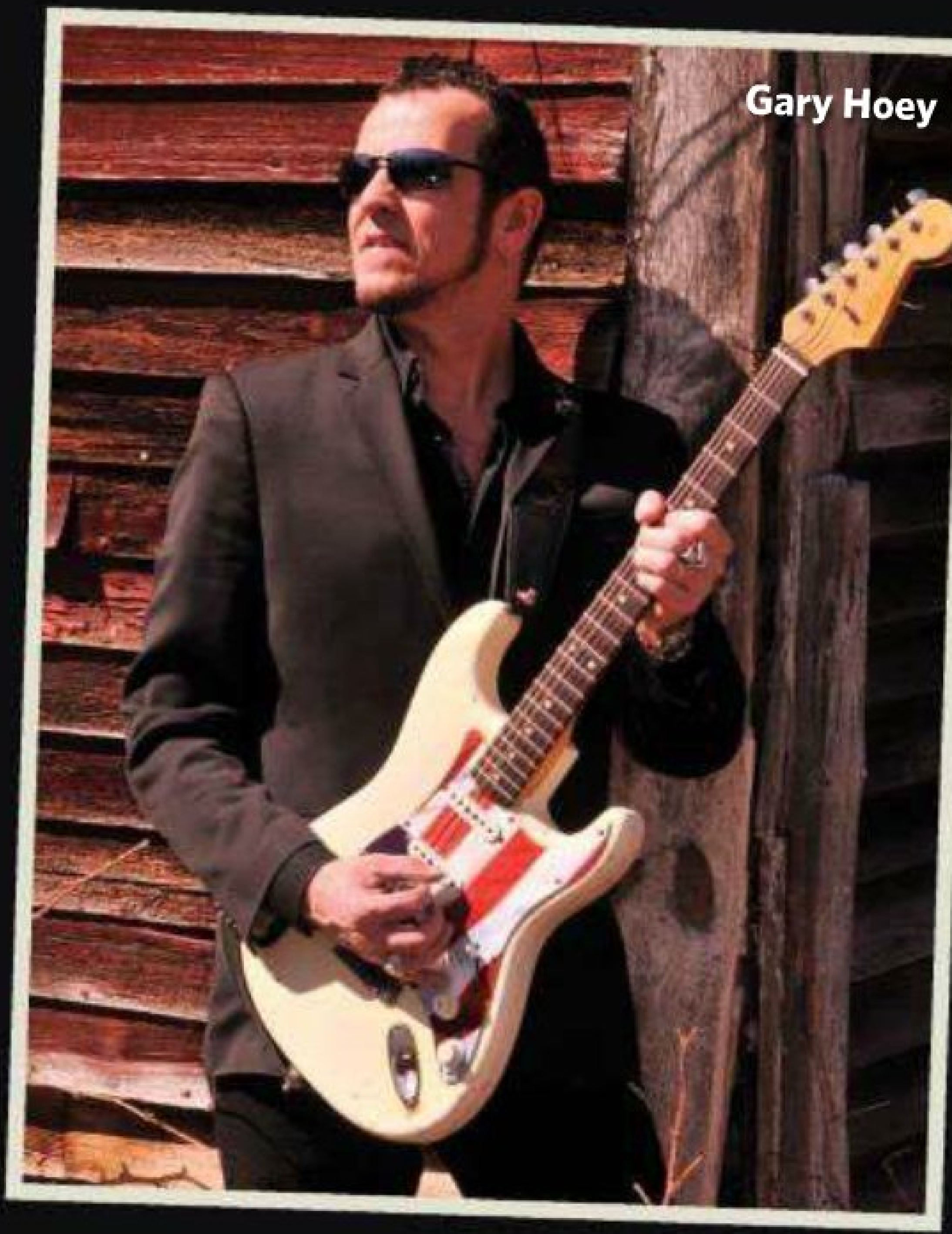
Blues Travellers

A motormouth virtuoso, a great white hope, and a wayward genius taking one last shot at the title. This is Rockin' The Blues, the tour that will either save the genre or self-destruct…

Words: **Henry Yates**

"I think we're gonna fight," drawls Gary Hoey, one third of the three-headed revue tour titled Rockin' The Blues. "I think there'll be drama backstage, lots of throwing and breaking things. By the end we'll be lighting each other's guitars on fire. Quinn Sullivan is gonna come back with full-sleeve tattoos, piercings all over his face; his own parents won't recognise him. Nah, I'm kidding. It's gonna be a great tour…"

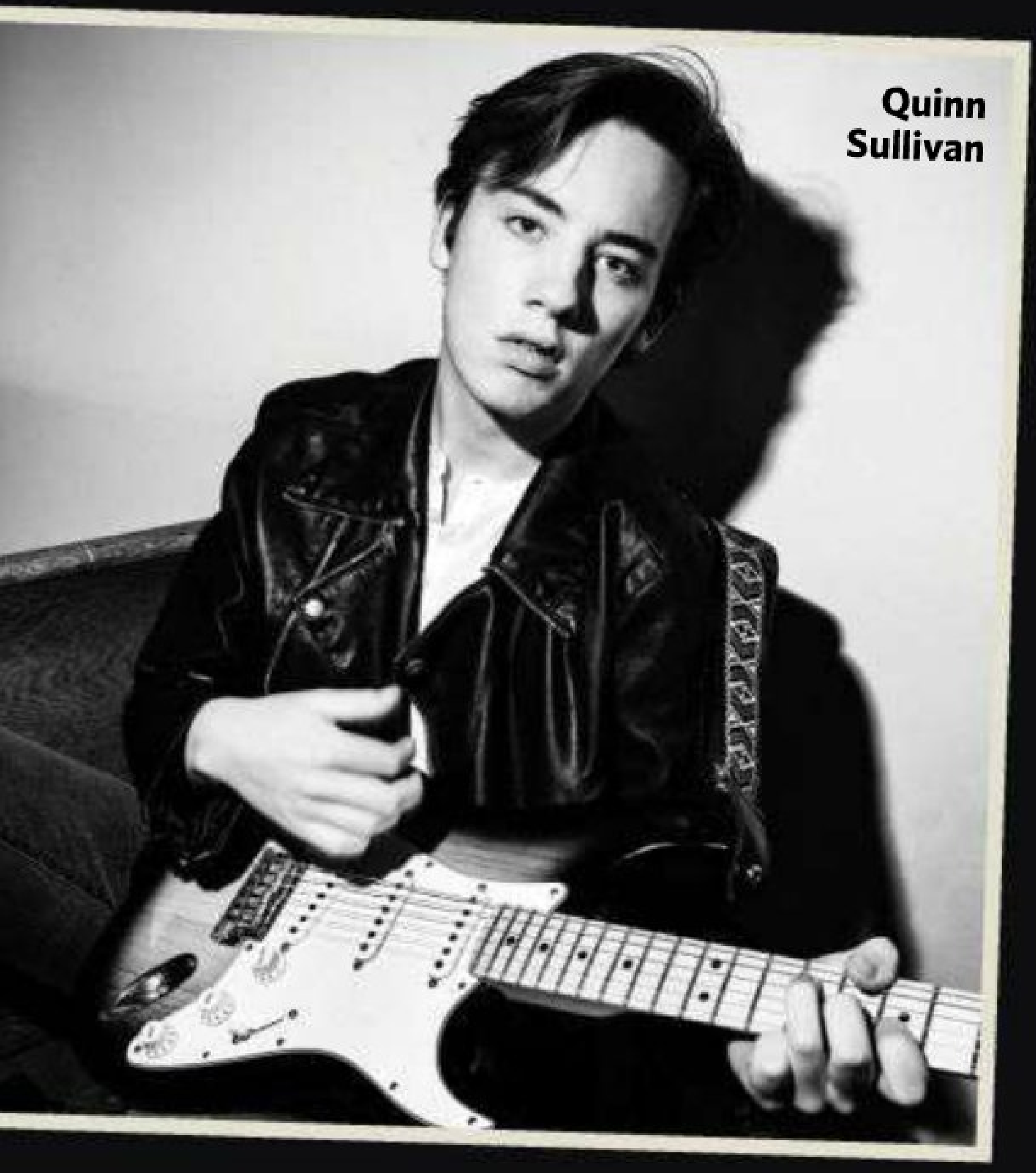
If the line-up of Hoey, Sullivan and Eric Gales hasn't imploded by the time it reaches London's Garage in March, then Rockin' The Blues should be one hell of a night out. The concept of bundling blues artists on one bill may not be a brand new one (veteran fans will recall the '62 American Folk Blues Festival, which introduced the Deep South titans to a sea of pimply British invaders-in-waiting). But it is unusual, and difficult, to the point where independent record label Provogue (an imprint of the Mascot Label Group) – whose roster is showcased on this month's CD – has spent the last year putting plans in place for this seven-date European tour. "It's been a long road," says CEO Ed van Zijl, "but we've got a great package. I like heavy, loud players."



Gary Hoey

Decibels are the common factor on this tantalisingly disparate bill. A fiery blues-rock virtuoso from a Massachusetts mill town, 57-year-old Hoey has war stories to burn. "We showed up one time in Cape Cod, and our agent had somehow booked us for a disco club. The guy tells me: 'We need to hear KC & The Sunshine Band', then showed me his gun. We learnt six disco songs and just looped them all night."

Bandleader Hoey made his mark in 1993 with a hit cover of Focus's *Hocus Pocus*, and was recently acclaimed for his 2016 album *Dust & Bones*, but he reminds me that he almost spent his career playing *Crazy Train*:. "When Ozzy was looking for a guitarist in 1987, I sent a tape out, got a callback and they flew me to LA. Ozzy knew what he was looking for: Zakk Wylde was the man. But just to have Ozzy say 'You have a style' – that made me go for it."



Quinn Sullivan

If Hoey is the tour's silverback, then it's hard to square 18-year-old Quinn Sullivan's tender years with the maturity of his playing. Even when the audiences were thin, he remembers, the mentoring of Chicago great Buddy Guy kept him pushing. "There have been times people didn't show up. But the thing I learnt from Buddy was that even if you're playing for six people, always act like there's a hundred thousand in the room."

Last year's *Midnight Highway* album was the tipping-point, identifying Sullivan as a bluesman with every musical colour in his palette. "Y'know, I'm an eighteen-year-old kid," he points out. "Obviously blues is one influence. But also rock, pop, R&B, hip-hop – it's all on there."

Texas gunslinger and Supersonic Blues Machine frontman Lance Lopez is a special guest (Hoey: "He's another very scary guitarist"). Then there's the wild card. In some parallel universe, Eric Gales's limousine would whisk him straight past The Garage to a venue more befitting of his huge talents, perhaps Wembley Arena or Hyde Park. From labelmate Joe Bonamassa to Mark Tremonti, the Memphis bluesman has been trumpeted as the best guitarist on the planet, and at points since his self-titled 1991 debut he's shown a dazzle that stands comparison to Hendrix (a reference helped along by his 'upside-down' guitar). "He does the craziest things I've ever seen," Hoey says simply. "I just can't figure it out."

But Gales's technique is not his only baffling quality. The 43-year-old has repeatedly hit self-destruct on his career. His lost years of addiction and incarceration are chronicled on last year's *Middle Of The Road* album. "Eric has been in and out of the scene for a while," says van Zijl. "In the last seventeen months he's got his life on the rails. No drugs, no alcohol."

Even on the straight and narrow, Gales isn't the easiest man to get hold of. My previous interviews with him have been frustrating affairs, usually conducted while he's out and about, generally curtailed by him giving monosyllabic answers to anything that doesn't tickle him. But today, when pressed, he seems aware that he should be bigger. "I mean, yeah, that crosses my mind. But, y'know, there is a purpose to everything in life. I think there's an even bigger picture that I don't think we've all seen yet.

"What I learnt from jail," he reflects, "is that it's a place I don't have any intentions on going back to. That part of my life is behind me, and it's all pressing forward to greater things. How hard is it to avoid temptation on the road? Not hard at all. The desire to do anything damaging to myself has completely left."

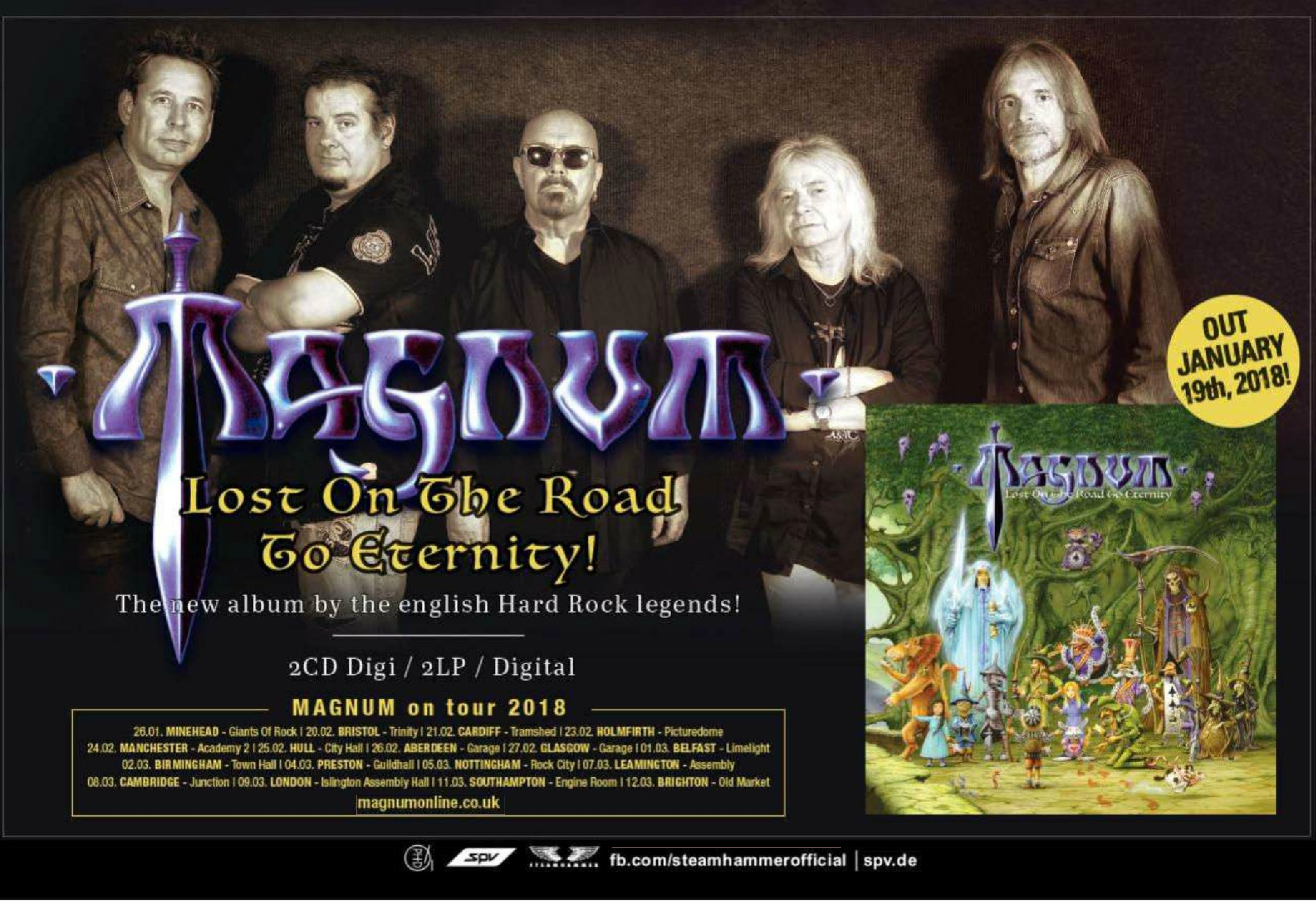
Certainly it's difficult to imagine the old Gales participating in the 'extras' for Rockin' The Blues punters who pay the higher (£50) ticket price. "We're doing workshops, guitar clinics and meet-and-greets," says Hoey. "The age of the untouchable rock star is over. My fans will message me the day of the show: 'What time you going on?' Can you imagine Facebooking Jimmy Page in 1976 and asking that? But that's part of it now. That's what people want."

Perhaps that's the bottom line. More than this tour being a money-spinner, Ed van Zijl sees Rockin' The Blues as a bridge-building exercise and an adrenalin shot to the wider blues scene. "Only jazz is a dirtier word than blues," he considers. "For young people it's uncool. But it's like anything in life – if something is good, it will survive. We all have the same goal: spreading the music, ideally to a younger audience. Rockin' The Blues is something that has to become part of our life, return every year, be a platform for our young artists. Maybe, in twenty years, I'd like Provogue to leave a similar mark to [Chess Records]. And this festival is part of that."

QUINN SULLIVAN: GRIFFIN LOTZ/PRES; GARY HOEY: JOE NETT/PRESS

Eric Gales: trumpeted as the best guitarist on the planet.

ERIC GALES: NICOLE WEINGART/PRESS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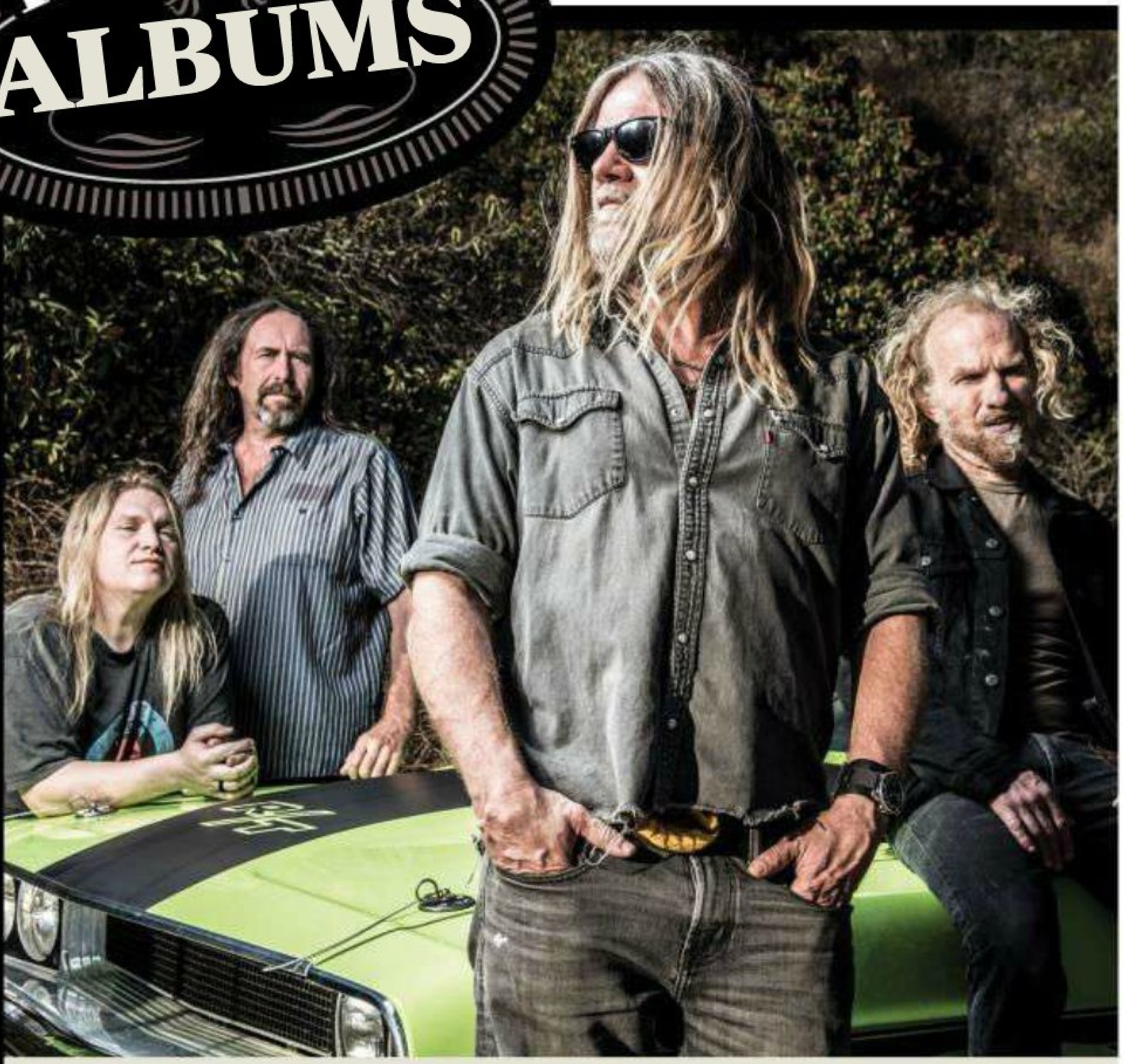
THE HARD STUFF ALBUMS



Corrosion Of Conformity

No Cross No Crown NUCLEAR BLAST

Pepper brings the boys back to the start.

If we're looking at classic rock as a living, breathing organism, one that adapts and evolves over the ever-rolling waves of time, one that holds its original axe-slinging deities in highest esteem but allows for the ordaining of new priests and idols along the way, then it's really time to let Corrosion Of Conformity luxuriate in the lap of the golden gods. That's because these motherfuckers have been at it forever, and they've just made their best album in 20 years.

There will be those among us who only ever accept the early-80s punk-metal crossover version as the 'real' Corrosion Of Conformity, but for the vast majority of rockers, it was the addition of the effortlessly charismatic frontman Pepper Keenan that drew them into the fold. His bluesy drawl reframed the band as long-haired, southern-fried arena rockers, a sort of feral Skynyrd.

Their first albums with Keenan up front, 1994's *Deliverance* and 1996's *Wiseblood*, were critical and commercial hits. Singles like *Albatross* and *Clean My Wounds* worked for the grunge rockers, worked for the stoner rockers, worked for the southern rebels, and the disaffected urban punks… worked for everybody, really. It was the perfect storm of depression, bravado and authentically gritty all-American rock'n'roll. They were a band for the people, by the people.

And it seemed like it would go on forever – but it didn't. Sales slumped and crowds thinned. Pepper's last ride with the band was 2005's *In The Arms Of God*, before he split to join Down for a decade. Corrosion Of Conformity kept going, of course, but they mostly appealed to the metal kids, with rehashes of their pre-Pepper thrash days.

Until right now. New album *No Cross No Crown* resets the good ship Corrosion Of Conformity at that exact moment back in, say, 1997, when we were all still riding high on the vapours of youth and excessive volume. While it's not a rehash of *Deliverance*, it's most definitely an extension of it, complete with the classic line-up, classic sound, and epic, mountain-scraping songs.

Furious first single *Cast The First Stone* sets the pace for an album that's utterly relentless in its intensity. There are the now-expected acoustic interludes so you can catch your breath here and there, but as face-melters like *Wolf Named Crow* and *Forgive Me* will attest to, this is Corrosion Of Conformity with their amps and their snarls turned up to 11. Thank Christ.

An instant classic.

Sleazegrinder

Yes

Topographic Drama – Live Across America RHINO

More than a tribute band.

With all the absentees, it's easy these days to view Yes as being no more than a glorified tribute band. But leave that preconception aside, because the current line-up do a sterling job in commemorating two Yes albums here.

There are six tracks from 1980's *Drama*. Often overlooked, the band highlight the strengths of songs like *Machine Messiah* and *Run Through The Light*. It's intriguing to hear vocalist Jon Davison's striking delivery – it has much in common with Jon Anderson.

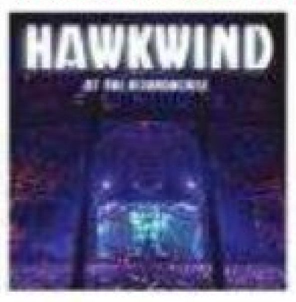
There are also three selections across 1973's *Tales From Topographic Oceans*, which work competently enough, albeit sounding a little hesitant at times. Add in four immortal Yes classics and you have a more than decent nostalgic whirl.

Malcolm Dome

Hawkwind

Hawkwind At The Roundhouse CHERRY RED

The space rockers return to the Chalk Farm venue.



Recorded in May 2017, this gig saw Dave Brock and co play again at the venue where they last played in 1977 (supported by Motörhead) and where five years earlier they had recorded *Silver Machine*.

A lot of rock has flown through space since then, but despite the loss of erstwhile comrades including Lemmy, Hawkwind sail on – this two-CD and DVD set features new songs as well as old. *Ascent*, for example, is a gently admonitory acoustic number that threatens to turn into Crowded House's *Weather With You*. Meanwhile, *Vegan Lunch* is a knockabout number that reflects the bumptious, very English good humour exuded by Brock between numbers.

That said, when the analogue synths crank up on *Born To Go*, a bubbling lab of arcing noise, the 'Wind still come across like honorary Krautrock cousins, their occasional futuristic flights of fancy striking a midpoint between Neu! and *Blake's 7*.

Finally, they're joined by ex-Motörhead guitarist Phil Campbell for an epic blast of *Silver Machine*, which roars on forever and sends everyone home happy. Their moment has passed but they're far from running on empty.

David Stubbs

Spectral Haze

Turning Electric TOTEM HEY

Like cough syrup, except you listen to it.

This is the second dose of heavy sedatives from this Oslo crew. Here's the thing: it's hard to see Earth from space when you're standing on it. The concept of a contemporary band cribbing freely from the early 70s proto-metal and space-rock movements might seem redundant to you, but it's all gonna be the same to kids a thousand years from now, and that's who Spectral Haze are playing for.

Musically, *Turning Electric* thrums nicely along a continuum that starts with Hawkwind, Gong and Sir Lord Baltimore, slips seamlessly through Monster Magnet and Spacemen 3, and lands in a colourful swirl somewhere near the tail end of the last century.

But the music is really just the entrance point. This is full-on immersion, a great gulping of nightmare and ecstasy, the kind of thing Meat Loaf mastermind Jim Steinman might've crafted for Black Sabbath during their *Sabotage* days.

The highlight has gotta be the frankly amazing *They Live*, a flurry of sub-basement riffs and bubbling 70s comic-book synth that only lasts for eight minutes but will make you feel like you just lost several days.

Sleazegrinder

Downes Braide Association

Skyscraper Souls

X2X/CHERRY RED

Selling Asia by the pound.

Five years after Geoff Downes hooked up with singer/producer Chris Braide, the duo's third album has fulfilled the promise of the first two and stands alongside anything Downes has achieved since Buggles.

The formula is simple enough: a mood-setting piano intro followed by some fluid, melodic vocals leading to a sequence of classic prog keyboard chords. And Braide's mid-Atlantic

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stylings blend well with Downes' resolutely British approach.

They revel in their 70s influences – the title track is an 18-minute epic – but unlikely collaborators like Kate Pierson (B-52's), Andy Partridge (XTC) and Marc Almond add their distinctive pop sensibilities.

The coup de grâce is using musicians instead of machines for the rhythm section, which makes the album swing like a lawnmower.

Hugh Fielder

OCS

Memory Of A Cut Off Head CASTLE FACE

Oh, see what he just did there?

The second of two albums released in rapid succession by prolific San Francisco musician John Dwyer, it's also the 20th of his 20-year career.

Most of them are noisy, energetic affairs released under the Oh Sees moniker, but he's turned down the volume for this mellow offering and reached back a decade to revive the OCS name. He's also linked up again with Brigid Dawson, whose voice is a foil for some of the darker currents that lurk below the folksy veneer of acoustic guitars and string arrangements.

He may have swapped his garage for a more pastoral setting, but he's taken his drugs with him. The surrealistic whimsy of the opening title track is regularly disrupted by sudden rhythm changes, and *The Baron Sleeps And Dreams* is disturbingly psychedelic.

As a stand-alone album, it's a trip. Where it fits in Dwyer's canon is another kettle of bananas entirely.

Hugh Fielder

Outlaws And Moonshine

Devil In The Moonshine

NEMESIS/VANITY MUSIC GROUP

Southern stereotypes honour the redneck cliché.

Bridging the gap between Lynyrd Skynyrd and Black Stone Cherry – heavier than the former and lighter than the latter – Outlaws And Moonshine may hail from Indianapolis, but they throw themselves head first into the moonshine-sluggin', gun-totin', yee-hawin' stereotypes of southern rock. Thankfully, they have the songwriting chops to carry it off.

Above all else, they perfectly capture the sheer merriment of the classic southern sound, and *Devil In The Moonshine* is a tight collection of memorable hooks, right from the rollicking, feel-good title track opener. Sure, the songwriting doesn't half ham it up at times: *Hey Y'all*'s *'My whole damn house smells of whiskey and gravy/My chick's smoking Marlboros, feeding our baby'*, and the random yelp of *'Redneck!'* in *Devil In The Moonshine* are pretty damn ridiculous. Still, you'll remember those lyrics when you're belting them back at your stereo, which you certainly will be.

Hannah May Kilroy

King Gizzard And The Lizard Wizard

Polygondwanaland HEAVENLY

Prolific psych squad favour quantity over quality.

This is undiluted prog. It's full of the sort of sprawling noodling and concentric riffs and random key and pace changes that you'd expect from King Crimson and Yes (minus the pomp). The opening 11-minute *Crumbling Castle* grabs a groove and does not let go.

Trouble is, how much of this can folk stand? The Perth, Australia band have released 12 albums since September 2012 – four in 2017 alone. These range from psych-jazz to surf pop to free-form jams to space rock. Some moments are sublime (2015's *Quarters!*). Some moments are full-on weird (2014's *I'm In Your Mind Fuzz*). And some moments… well, some moments you wish for a bit of quality control and that they'd remember to turn off the recording equipment when they leave the studio. This, of course, is anathema to the whole Gizzard credo, though – and so, good on 'em.

This is a set of unlistenable, wigged-out, repetitive, directionless grooves in the main, but we love 'em anyway.

Everett True

Primitive Race

Soul Pretender METROPOLIS

Chuck Mosley's unique and gritty sonic legacy.

Primitive Race began as an industrial supergroup, created by producer/bassist Chris Kniker and featuring a rotating cast of musicians who've been involved with the likes of Gary Numan, Skinny Puppy, Combichrist and The Mission.

While their 2015 self-titled debut was heavy on the electronic and industrial, second album *Soul Pretender* saw them adding new members – ex-Faith No More vocalist Chuck Mosley and Melvins drummer Dale Crover – and making a sonic U-turn to produce a gritty mash-up of alt.rock, grunge and punk that's boisterously unique yet undeniably 90s.

Sadly, Mosley passed away unexpectedly a mere week after the album's release. His gruff, gravelled vocals are centre stage, from the ragged chants of *Row House* to the punk grooves of *Cranial Matter*, and the best way to approach *Soul Pretender* in light of this tragic news is to hear it as a diverse piece of work that honours his memory.

Hannah May Kilroy

Glenn Proudfoot

Fire And Rain BIRD'S ROBE

Puppet mastery.

If Australian guitarist Glenn Proudfoot can deliver the kind of stadium show that the songs on this album are made for, then he's in for a meteoric rise.

After five albums that have steadily raised his profile among axe aficionados, he's made a break for the big time with the appropriately titled *Fire And Rain*. It's a grand amalgam of Metallica and Bryan Adams, with some Van Halen thrown in for good measure.

The songs typically start with cloudbursts of rhythmic fury and raw, impassioned vocals that grind to harmonious, anthemic choruses before Proudfoot cuts loose with some melodic shredding. This is all bathed in an echoing reverb that rattles round your speakers. It's a bold move – too bold maybe.

Hugh Fielder

ROUND-UP: BLUES

By Henry Yates

Jack J Hutchinson: southern-smoked blues rock with hooks, choruses, the lot.

JACK J HUTCHINSON: ROB BLACKHAM/PRESS

Jack J Hutchinson

Paint No Fiction

PSYCHEDELIC STRING

Things are looking up for Jack J Hutchinson. It's a decade since the Burnley-born songwriter made his ignominious London debut (a gig that ended in a stand-off with a stage invader). Now, with his Pledge target for *Paint No Fiction* smashed in 24 hours, it seems public opinion has swung behind this bowler-hatted, runaway-bearded, pint-sinking everyman.

Here, Hutchinson strays beyond the confines of his Boom Boom Brotherhood band, submerging his Britishness on an album of southern-smoked blues rock with hooks, choruses, the lot. *Deal With The Devil* you should already know: this recent *Classic Rock* Track Of The Week has a Crowes strut and lift-off harmony chorus. *Hip Slickin'*, too, conjures the Robinsons at their catchiest.

Even the slower moments impress, with *Hold Me Close* awakening memories of prime-time Oasis, and the affecting *Send Me A Signal* decorated with strings and jazz brushes.

He's got the charisma and tunes. With a flash of luck, Hutchinson can't fail.

Jane Lee Hooker

Spiritus RUF

New York's punk-blues riot girls kicked up some great noise with their 2016 covers set, *No B!*, and *Spiritus* marks a smooth gearshift into original material. Lips are still curled, whether that's Dana 'Danger' Athens barking orders over barbwire guitars on the rabble-rousing *How Ya Doin'?* or the pummelling *Black Rat*, which is like the world's scariest Rentokil jingle. Consider us hooked.

The James Hunter Six

Whatever It Takes DAPTONE

Sweet lord, that voice. When Hunter sings – from the ad-lib holler of *Mm-Hmm* to the wild honey he pours over big-band rattler *Don't Let Pride Take You For A Ride* – there's nothing else in the world. The sleeve of *Whatever It Takes* shows the gold-lunged soul man chugging on a cigarette: it's the best endorsement the nicotine industry has had in years.

Black Devil Byrds

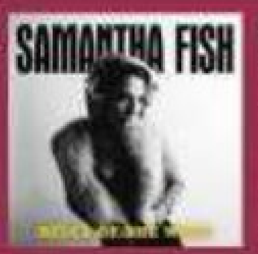
Dead And In Prison

OUTLAW COUNTRY

You wait all decade for one bastard-blues project from Long John Laundry, then two come along at once. Running alongside his Killer Blues Collective, these are dirty Byrds indeed, highlights like *Lay Me Down* and the spaghetti western title track bursting with manic brass and defiled by the protagonist's low-down snarl. It's dangerous-sounding, compelling stuff.

Samantha Fish

Belle Of The West RUF



Just when you thought you had Samantha Fish's career trajectory mapped, she slips the net. *Belle Of The West* is the best kind of reinvention, the Kansas bandleader deftly stirring country flavours into her blues foundation, and delivering highlights like *Need You More* and *Daughters* with such trembled sincerity that you can't accuse her of chasing the yee-haw dollar. Impressive.

Phil Campbell And The Bastard Sons

The Age Of Absurdity *NUCLEAR BLAST*

Cymru Am Byth: ex-Motörhead guitarist keeps it in the family.

Likely acting as some sort of catharsis to the pain of loss and grief, in retrospect, Phil Campbell's strategy of focusing his energies into this family-filled project has proved both a bold and brave move: some icons' shoes can never be refilled.

Phil Campbell's All Starr Band trod Europe's boards, delivering a boisterous collection of classic covers (Black Sabbath, Led Zeppelin, Thin Lizzy). Now that part-time knockabout act has mutated into a bona fide proposition, *The Age Of Absurdity* marking their first album proper, stepping up from last year's self-titled EP.

Campbell's three sons – Todd, Dane and Tyla (also a member of the criminally underrated The People The Poet) – are an exceptionally talented trio of Welsh bearded bastards, and the family DNA knits everything together as much as the dynamics of the musical interplay. It's tight. Very tight.

Eschewing the grittier and scuzzier elements of Motörhead's aesthetic for a far cleaner, punchier approach, the energy is high and there's a rich seam of enjoyment. Think classic rock with a metal production (pinpoint-perfect guitar tones, a snare sound to die for) and a shitload of swagger and you've got a layman's review that's actually not too far off the mark.

Scratch deeper, though, and there's more than meets the ear. Vocalist Neil Starr, possessor of a characterful tonality and CV (Attack! Attack!), expertly channels both his inner Anselmo and outer bluesman to considerable effect, ably demonstrating solid need not mean meat-and-potatoes.

Throughout, the riffs are superior and archetypal, and Campbell senior's lead work shines, with a deft fizz and rejuvenated spirit that's best illustrated on album closer *Into The Dark* and the standout *Dark Days*. A Deep South (Pontypridd?) gothic blues workout, the space it affords reveals the band's strength and depth.

Album opener *Ringleader* is another highlight – a ripsnorter nodding furiously to Metallica, AC/DC and Motörhead's *Bomber* as it speeds by. Similarly, there's the infectious and anthemic *Get On Your Knees*; an instant classic possibly marred by some ambiguous lyrics that hopefully point towards first-person narrative misanthropy rather than actual misogyny.

All in, it's superior stuff, brimming with self-effacement and fun that belies the quality and seriousness from which it's constructed. Decent family values in anyone's book.

Tim Batcup

Black Label Society

Grimmest Hits *SPINEFARM*

Zack Wylde's tenth album of metal, country and blues.

You'd be mistaken for thinking Zakk Wylde had taken a moment for quiet contemplation with what might pass for another best-of collection, but *Grimmest Hits* is another new release from the prolific singer, solo artist and Ozzy guitarist. He also spends his summers as frontman of the excellent Zakk Sabbath – we'll let you guess what their source material is.

There are occasional Sabbath notes here too. *Seasons Of Falter* opens like it might have appeared on *Vol 4*, before segueing into a woozy Alice In Chains motif. *The Betrayal* also has the Iommi ring to it, and an Ozzy-like vocal line, but with a guitar tone like Wylde's, it's sometimes hard to see past his influences.

That said, his love of country music is self evident in the magical *The Only Words*. Which is not to deny BLS their own identity – their marriage of music styles is easy to take for granted, but hard to overlook.

Philip Wilding

Neil Young + Promise Of The Real

The Visitor *REPRISE*

He may be 72, but he's still not done yet.

The joy (and sometimes frustration) of Neil Young is that not just decade by decade, but album by album, you never know which Neil Young will turn up. Lovelorn romantic? Grumpy old man? Angry, eternally youthful rebel? Mischief-maker? Car maven? And it's all against backdrops that may be as gentle as Crosby, Stills & Nash, as raw as grunge, as wistful as country, or as maverick as the mood takes him. Right now, his mood is kaleidoscopic.

Young's second studio collaboration with Promise Of The Real, the adaptable ensemble fronted by Willie Nelson's son Lukas, is loosely linked by its anti-Trump undertow (*'No wall, no hate,'* he chants on *Already Great*), but it's a smorgasbord of styles.

The opening *Already Great* clatters its raggedy way into the room like a party drunk, with clanging, atonal guitar, echo-laden drums and a pub piano, before Young reminds us, *'I'm Canadian by the way, and I love the USA.'* Then it soars into an elegiac, supertight chorus.

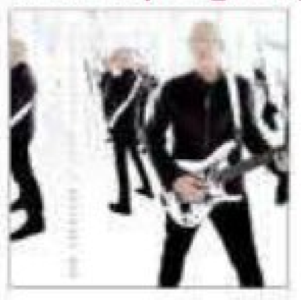
Diggin' A Hole is scratchy blues; *Almost Always* could have graced *Harvest Moon*; *Stand Tall* and *Children Of Destiny* are earworms; but if you want beauty, you've got it on *Carnival*, once the cackling stops. Neil Young is reborn, yet again.

John Aizlewood

Joe Satriani

What Happens Next *LEGACY/SONY*

Satriani unveils solo album and supergroup.



It's hard to still startle the listener the way a young Joe Satriani once did. Not because he might have lost his spur or rhythm – in truth, his playing has become even more dense and spectacular with time – but it's in the familiarity. Everyone assumes they know Joe Satriani and his pyrotechnic playing.

What Happens Next is another dazzling set of virtuosity, verve and light and shade, especially brilliant in the delicate *Cherry Blossoms*, the melodious *Righteous* and the driven *Headrush*. However, the ace he's played this time is enlisting Glenn Hughes and Chad Smith as his backing band. It gives the record a cohesiveness and energy, the trio driving the song home every single time and sounding all the better for it.

Who knows, maybe Glenn can sing on the next one and we wouldn't all have to wonder if we'll ever see another Chickenfoot record.

Philip Wilding

Lovebites

Awakening From Abyss *JPU*

Japanese all-girl power metal is the new black.

Power metal has always been like the nerdy younger brother of hard rock, obsessed with dragons and shredding and wearing chainmail or whatever while the rest of us are busy destroying ourselves with motorcycles, leather, whiskey and the devil.

And that's what makes Lovebites' storming debut so compelling and confounding. They aren't Renaissance faire obsessed middle-aged goons, but rather a quintet of young Japanese women, a sort of Babymetal for Dragonforce fans. But while there's some novelty

at play here – drummer Haruni has star-shaped cymbals, for Chrissakes – they're all business on *Awakening From Abyss.*

All the hallmarks of elite power metal are here: soaring vocals, speed metal played with alarming finesse, and plenty of bullshit about *'hammers of wrath'* and living forever at the edge of the world.

The relentless 100mph blister of guitarists Midori and Mi-Ya is clearly the highlight of this whole affair. It's like two Yngwie Malmsteens in white prom dresses setting the world on fire with a million fleet-fingered notes. If that's your bag, then Lovebites might be the iron maidens you've been looking for.

Sleazegrinder

Pugwash

Silverlake LOJINX

Brian Wilson-approved craftsman perseveres.

Whether co-writing cricket concept albums as the Duckworth Lewis Method or working under his Pugwash moniker, Thomas Walsh is Dublin's equivalent to Ron Sexsmith, pursuing an outmoded ideal of pop perfection to his heroes' approval and considerable public indifference. Still, Jeff Lynne loves him, and ex-Jellyfish man Jason Falkner invited him to LA so they could make this seventh Pugwash album together.

With strings giving a Nick Drake touch to *Sunshine True* and *Such A Shame* imagining a McCartney/Harrison ballad, this is a walk through a vanished pop Eden whose gates closed back in 1975.

Walsh can also rise above his references. *Autarch* pastiches Harrison at his most lugubrious, but as guitars buck into a Bolan boogie, the song gains an unpredictable life of its own.

'I could try a different style but I'm just so lazy,' Walsh confesses during *Easier Done Than Said.* Why change a losing but heartfelt formula?

Nick Hasted

Skids

Burning Cities NOBAD

The Skids are coming... back with a bang.

Celebrating four decades since they formed in Dunfermline, the Skids storm into the valley of the reunion circuit – as they first did ten years ago – with an album that seems determined to show they can still jump up and down.

Produced by Youth, it's a route-one volley of loud guitar riffs and peripatetic punk energy, railing at the establishment. It's our world, they roar, and it's on fire, so let's not go gently. It's almost a relief when they drop the tempo for the artier broodings of *Refugee*, but make no mistake, this is generally so rowdy that you half expect them to yell "Albert Tatlock!" at any moment.

Original members Richard Jobson and bassist Bill Simpson are now joined by Big Country man Bruce Watson and his son Jamie on guitars, with Mike Baillie drumming. Post-punk? The Armoury Show? Un film de Richard Jobson? Forget it. This is old-school protest.

Chris Roberts

Anvil

Pounding The Pavement

STEAMHAMMER/SPV

Fitfully ambitious offering from Canadian heavy metal trio.

Regardless of music taste, you'd have to be incredibly cold to come away from the film *Anvil! The Story Of Anvil* without wishing them well in all their endeavours. They've been recording for almost 40 years now and unlike, say, Metallica, they're still doing battle with the wolf forever at the door – hence the album title.

It feels like they're caught in two minds here – eager to please fans who just want more of their rudimentary, formulaic heavy rock, as churned out on *Bitch In The Box*, *Smash Your Face* and *Rock That Shit*. Elsewhere, however, they do attempt a couple of left swerves – the almost jazzy arc of *Warming Up*, or *Nanook Of The North*, which explores the Inuit heritage of their homeland.

While the latter is hardly The Residents' *Eskimo*, it does at least venture into an interlude of overtone singing that breaks up the otherwise relentless metal propulsion.

David Stubbs

The Atomic Bitchwax

Force Field TEEPEE

Monster Magnet-affiliated stoners feel the force.

Formed in 1993 by bassist Chris Josnik, New Jersey's the Atomic Bitchwax took 70s riff-rock and psych as their jam band launch pad, enhanced by former Core singer-guitarist Finn Ryan after 2005, and Raging Slab drummer Bob Pantella in 2007.

After 2011's *The Local Fuzz* thrashed over 50 riffs in one 42-minute track (the rhythm section joining Monster Magnet may have something to do with it), TAB reached stoner hero status with 2015's *Gravitron.* That's now clinched with another dose of short blasts from the crazy zone, riffs dried out from the first Motörhead album and titles including *Hippie Speedball*, *Earth Shaker (Which Doobie U Be)*, *Alaskan Thunder Fuck* and *Fried Dyed And Layin' To The Side.*

Kris Needs

Audrey Horne

Blackout NAPALM

Bergen rockers' sixth album spoons on the meat'n'potatoes.

Audrey Horne may take their name from a character in *Twin Peaks*, but they have none of that show's brain-melting weirdness. The Norwegians' sixth album is more Vintage TV than David Lynch: a square-peg-in-a-square hole mix of retro riffs, duelling guitars and levels of cowbell that must surely exceed responsible limits.

That's not to say *Blackout* isn't without its charms. *This Is War, Light Your Way* and the title track pummel along like someone has shoved a tube of paper up the band's arse and set fire to it.

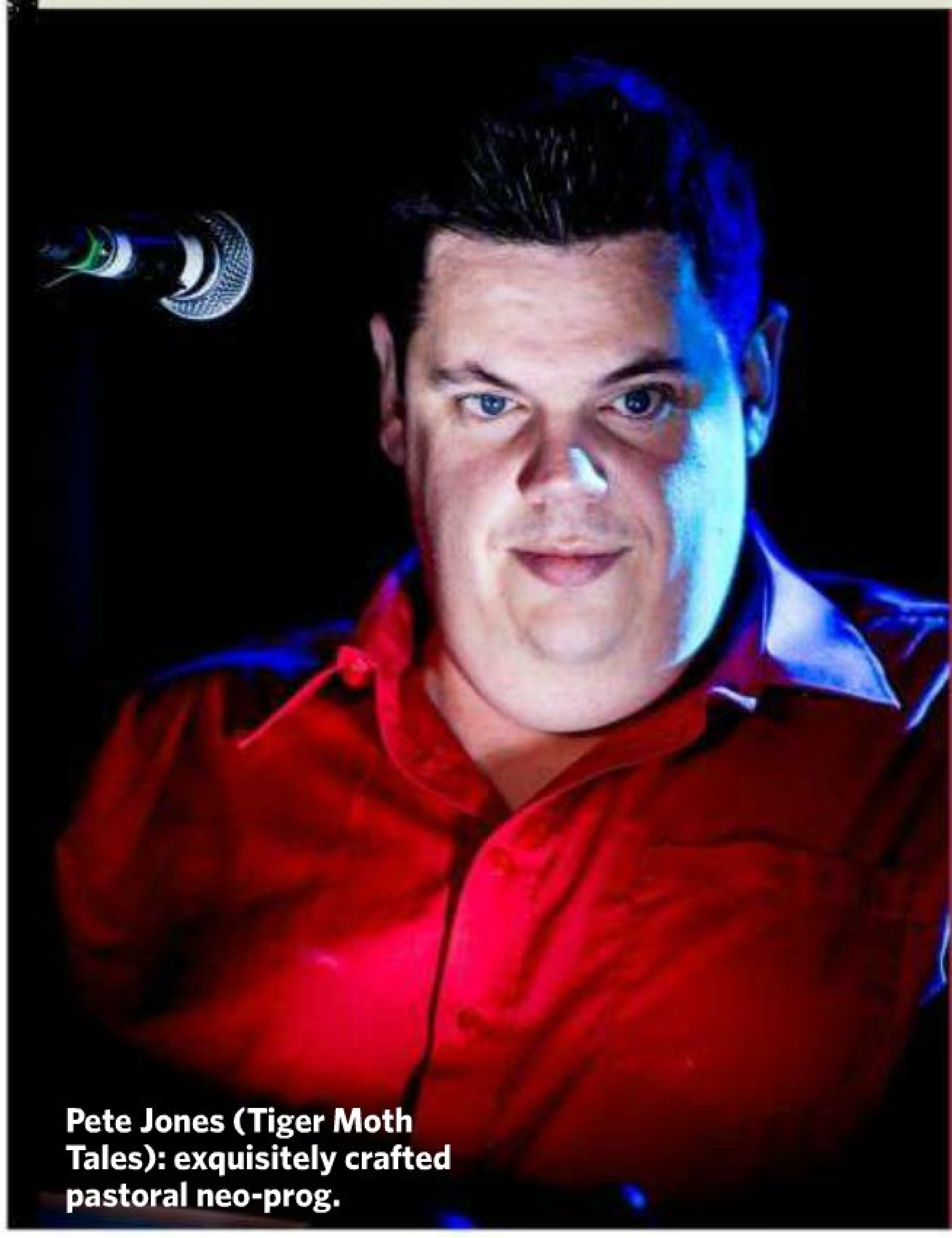
The same can't be said of the sensitive-biker-dude plod *This Man*, which puts its fingers in its belt loops in the first few seconds and resolutely refuses to take them out – something not helped by singer Torkjell Rød's bland bellow.

Audrey Horne's line-up is drawn from the likes of prog-metal behemoths Enslaved and stoner-rock upstarts Sahg, and there's the strong whiff of 'hobby project' from people too young to remember it first time around. The result is nothing you haven't heard before, and certainly nothing to give David Lynch nightmares.

Dave Everley

ROUND-UP: PROG

By Jo Kendall



Pete Jones (Tiger Moth Tales): exquisitely crafted pastoral neo-prog.

Tiger Moth Tales

Depths Of Winter WHITE KNIGHT

Good old prog, never afeared of a Christmas album. That's what *Depths Of Winter* essentially is, Pete Jones savvily giving his third LP a broader titling for a longer shelf life.

But Jones is a clever cookie musically, too. The Nottingham-based performer lost his sight to retinoblastoma at 15 months old, but by the age of four was playing the piano. In 1988, aged eight, he won the junior final of the BBC's *A Song For Christmas* competition.

Perhaps *Depths* has been fermenting in his mind ever since then, being 10 tracks of exquisitely crafted pastoral neo-prog with a nifty *Game Of Thrones* reference right at the get-go (*Winter Is Coming*).

On this album, Jones excels not only as a storyteller, but also as an arranger and instrumentalist, a one-man Big Big Train on epics such as *Winter Maker* and *The Tears Of Frigga.*

The Gabriel-like *Hygge* is a flawless tear-jerker and there's a Bollywood *Star Trek* spin on *Troika* for *Sleigh Ride.*

Do you believe in Father Christmas? Then get this under your tree.

Intervals

The Way Forward INTERVALS

Want your instrumental prog technical, riff-driven, but with shades of jazz and yacht rock? Canada's Aaron Marshall can help. On his third album he retains his ethic that "an instrument is a means of communication", with eight tracks of fleet-fingered exposition that always retain melody amid the post-djent profusion. *Touch And Go* is a terrific taster – colourful, bouncy, Steve Vai-style playfulness.

Turn Me On Dead Man

Heavy Metal Mothership

HEAVY PSYCH SOUNDS

Named after *Revolution 9*'s tenuous backmasked message, this excellent fifth by the San Fran stoners should be played forwards for its full psych-rockin' impact. Fans of Hawkwind, Sabbath and Big Elf will revel in *Mind Of Oz*'s monolithic DikMik groovathon or *Master Planet + Mother Star + Secret Moon*'s Mastodon blowout.

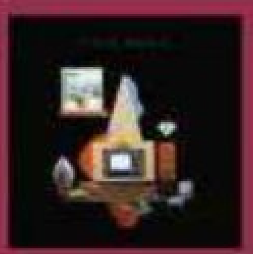
Jordan Rudess And Steve Horelick

Intersonic LAZY BONES

Here Dream Theater keyboard maestro Rudess teams up with Steve Horelick for a trip into ambient classical. Whether piano led (*Child Mind*), burbling with minimalist figures (*Particles*), or creeping you out with Radiophonic atmos (*Swarms*), it's both the soundtrack to a spa minibreak in the Cotswolds *and* intense cinematic experimentalism.

Field Music

Open Here MEMPHIS INDUSTRIES



Sunderland's sibling art-rockers return with a sixth album spun on a James Brown/XTC /10cc axis, embellished beautifully by flute, sax, strings and choir, "pushing in every direction we can go," they've declared. Mellifluent art-pop (*Time Of Joy*) meets social privilege (*Count It Up*), culminating in the breathtaking symphonic suite *Find A Way To.* All Canterbury capers by way of Paisley Park and Tyne & Wear.

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Rush

A Farewell To Kings – 40th Anniversary

MERCURY RECORDS/UNIVERSAL

In which three Toronto longhairs become the only men ever to emerge stronger from a trip into a black hole…

A Farewell To Kings, first released in September 1977, is the album on which Canadian trio Rush became the biggest underground band in the world.

After sounding like Zeppelin on steroids on their 1974 debut, they did their best to wriggle out of that straitjacket by adding prog to their metal. They teased us with eight and a half minutes of fantasy rock called *By-Tor And the Snow Dog* on their second album, then confused us with the side-long *The Fountain Of Lamneth* on the third, then left us awestruck with the titular first side of *2112* in 1976. No matter how clever they sounded, though, they remained a guitar/bass/drums combo. To truly come of age, as they do here, they needed a fourth element – synthesisers. Initially, we thought they'd gone soft, but looking back, they were honed diamond-hard.

Coming after their *All The World's A Stage* double live album – the first in what would be a series of epoch-closing in-concert packages – their fifth studio release was bound to be a fresh start. But no one expected it to sound *this* different. True, they had employed keys, sporadically, on *2112*. But here, while lyricist Neil Peart festooned his drum kit with all manner of wooden and metallic percussion, both bassist/singer Geddy Lee *and* guitarist Alex Lifeson adopted Taurus bass pedal synths. More significantly, Lee played a Minimoog.

In truth, he was behind the curve – Keith Emerson and Rick Wakeman having taken to using Minimoogs around 1970, for studio work and touring – but for Rush it was revolutionary. It opened up a world of possibilities for future development, while at the same time setting unexpected challenges in live performance.

Such problems were the least of their worries as they began what now seems a short three-week residency at Rockfield Studios in South Wales. Recording for the first time

outside their native Canada removed the distractions of family and friends… but the band were quickly homesick and fazed both by the remoteness of Rockfield's isolation and the cumulative pressure of four years of almost non-stop touring. There's no way that anything good should have come out of such circumstances, but *Kings* is better than good. It's Rush at their peak.

For 38 minutes it takes the listener on an extraordinary journey, first lulled by an acoustic guitar before the swaggering hookline and revolutionary history motif on its opening title track, then buoyed all the way to the frantic riffing and the heart of a black hole at the end of final number *Cygnus X-1*. Even the least-loved track, *Madrigal* (a mournful lament meandering to a sleepy fade) has improved with age.

Add to that the unlikely UK Top 40 hit *Closer To The Heart* (led by Peart's glockenspiel and judicious use of vibraslap) and the joyful rocker *Cinderella Man* (featuring Lee's extraordinary and, at times, ridiculously funky bass-playing) and you're getting warmer…

The afterburners on this album, though, are its two epics: the aforementioned space-rock riot *Cygnus* (which begins with echoey effects and producer Terry Brown's synthesised spoken intro, and ends with Geddy Lee screeching the line, '*Every nerve is torn apaaaaart,*' like a method actor) and the peerless *Xanadu* (Peart's soaring and imaginative take on Samuel Taylor Coleridge's poem *Kubla Khan*). With dazzling guitar by Lifeson and evocations of pleasure domes and honeydew, *Xanadu* remains Rush's *Stairway To Heaven*. Goosebumps guaranteed.

The brilliance of the above mean you'll soon learn to live without this multi-format expanded package's bonus quartet of cover versions, the most pointless of these being Dream Theater's to-the-second, note-for-note interpretation of *Xanadu*. Big Wreck (metalling-up *Closer To The Heart*) and fellow Canadians The Trews (with *Cinderella Man*) at least counterpoint Lee's infamously higher-pitched delivery with the respective voices of Ian Thornley and Colin MacDonald. But only Chilean Alain Johannes (sideman to the Foos and Them Crooked Vultures, among others) has the courage to truly rearrange, with a fine reworking of *Madrigal*.

Also included is *Cygnus Ex-2 Eh* – by Rush themselves – but these four minutes of experimenting with textures and echoes really should have remained an outtake.

The *big* bonus, then, is the full 98-minute live show from Hammersmith Odeon on February 20, 1978 – from the first tour to feature material "from our *Kings* album", as Geddy introduces it. The set-list is similar to *All The World's A Stage*, but drops some of the older material to make room for *Xanadu* (the expectant cheer as it begins indicative of the impact it had already had), '*Kings* itself, *Cygnus X-1* and, as a closer, *Cinderella Man*.

'*Kings* is better than good. It's Rush at their peak.'

Other highlights are the full version of *2112* and a great segue that welds *Working Man* to *Fly By Night*. It all leads to the conclusion that this might just be better than any Rush live album previously released – it's far beyond the sum of its musicians' parts. Remember: there are only three guys in Rush.

Neil Jeffries

The Members

Greatest Hits: All The Singles
ANGLO CENTRIC

Sounds of the suburbs.

The Members were probably the greatest pop-punk band of the time. They wrote melancholic, tragicomic songs in the best melancholic, tragicomic British beatpop tradition, covering love, bedsits and loneliness, best exemplified by their debut *Solitary Confinement*, and their biggest hit, *Sound Of The Suburbs*.

They had a short career, with songs like *Radio* and the brilliant *Working Girl* doing badly, but then revived themselves without vocalist Nicky Tesco: many, many recent songs are included, all of them excellent, from *Smartphone Junkie* to *Incident At Surbiton*, indicating that their Kinks-with-an-edge spirit remains intact.

Unlike most compilations from this era, *All The Singles* contains the 45 version of *Suburbs* for a change (but not, oddly, the original Stiff single of *Solitary Confinement*). It would have been nice to have some more earlier glories (*Rat Up A Drainpipe*, the 12-inch of *Offshore Banking Business*, say), but this is still an excellent collection, showing that not all late-70s punk and new wave bands need to be entirely mired in the past.

David Quantick

The Beatles

The Christmas Records
APPLE

Baby you can drive my sleigh.

Long before a Beatles Christmas meant divisive hissy fits over cover versions in department store TV ads, Fabs fan club members were treated to exclusive season's greetings from their idols. This well-appointed box comprises the seven specially recorded seven-inch singles mailed to devotees each year between 1963 and '69, reproduced in their original sleeves and pressed in a rainbow selection of coloured vinyl.

They have never before been available as one package (a few excerpts made it on to the late-90s anthology compilations), and it's perhaps surprising that the band's love of Goons-style humour survives throughout, although by '69 they're no longer huddled round one microphone delivering a joint message. Yoko Ono shoehorns her way onto the last disc, interviewing John about his favourite festive food ("corn flakes prepared by Parisienne hands, blessed by a Hare Krishna mantra").

Hearing them muck about on a variety of instruments is great fun, although the kazoo/harmonica version of *Jingle Bells* is unlikely to elicit too many repeat plays, and the missives are most charming when the boys' wit is in full flight (Paul: "Thanks for buying our records. Don't know where we'd be without you." George: "In the army, perhaps.").

Rarely longer than four or five minutes apiece, none of the discs feature complete songs, although the 40-second full-harmonies ditty *Christmas Time Is Here Again* from '67 could feasibly have been expanded for a proper release and potential yuletide chart-topper. Mind you, they already had that particular accolade covered with *Hello Goodbye*.

Terry Staunton

Rose Tattoo

Tatts Live In Brunswick At The Bombay Bicycle Club 1982
GOLDEN ROBOT

Tat'll do nicely.

As Rose Tattoo played this show, they seemed poised to follow AC/DC's career trajectory. Having blitzed the pubs Down Under and captured the UK's imagination, international success looked like a credible next step. And yet the US tour intended as their breakthrough campaign would derail them at their peak a year later.

With no official live album issued during the glory days, this newly mastered radio broadcast fills that gap more than adequately, preserving the Tatts' onstage belligerence in its rawest form.

Promoting *Scarred For Life* (1982), the classic Anderson-Wells-Royall-Leach formation, augmented by new boy Rob Riley, bludgeon the audience into submission with hits (*Rock N Roll Outlaw*, *One Of The Boys*), and the pick of the new album.

Riley's songwriting adds a more commercial feel, with no loss of ferocity on the title cut and *We Can't Be Beaten*, making this a welcome postscript to their vintage era.

Rich Davenport

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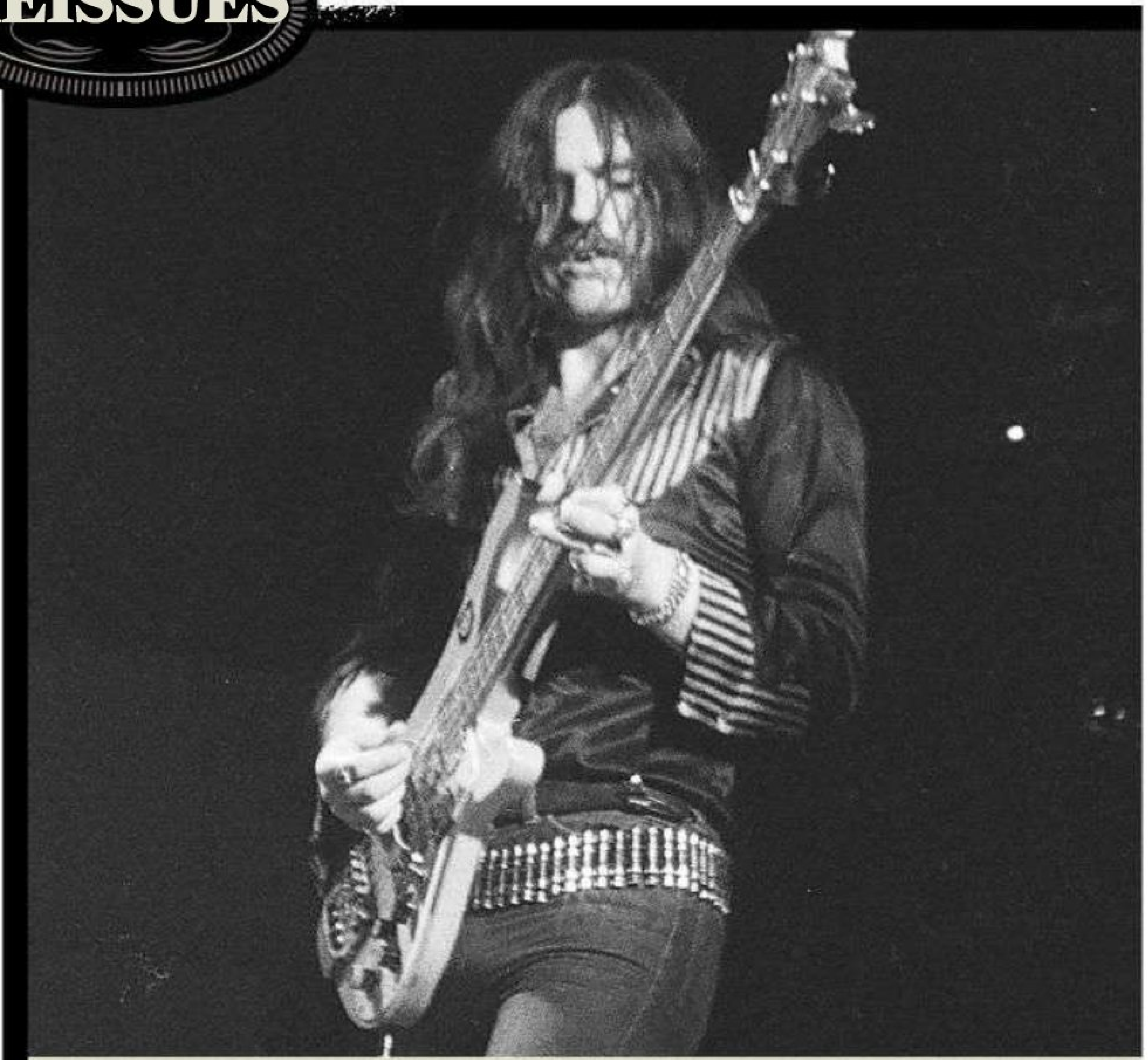


Motörhead

Motörhead 40th Anniversary Edition

CHISWICK

Motörhead, remember them now.

It's still the most gloriously psychotic, rock-revolutionising entrance on record, as Lemmy's rusty chain bass lacerates, Philthy's drums avalanche and 'Fast' Eddie's flame-snorting guitar introduces their parched, raging anthem to a five-day speed jag. With that June 1977 signature bombardment, Motörhead had arrived… but not before two years often spent hanging on for dear life.

Times weren't shifting in Motörhead's favour after Lemmy formed the band following his ejection from Hawkwind. They'd already been called the worst band in the world and now the UK was enthralled by bands with short hair bellowing about anarchy. Although disparaged as ruffian relics from Notting Hill's burnt-out hippie scene, Lemmy looked to the MC5 and upped gears until Motörhead were faster, louder, dirtier and more dangerous than anything in punk.

By April 1977, Motörhead had decided to split after one last Marquee gig. Lemmy phoned Chiswick Records' Ted Carroll, whom he knew from his Rock On record stall, asking if he could record the show. Although Carroll couldn't get a mobile, the last-gasp blinder Motörhead played persuaded him to front a single. The trio hit Escape Studios in Kent, with Speedy Keen producing. Seizing the moment with a big bag of speed, Motörhead ejaculated an album's worth of backing tracks in 24 hours – enough for Carroll to allow an album and record deal.

The single appeared resplendent in Joe Petagno's Snaggletooth logo and sold its 18,000 run, followed by *Motörhead* in August. As the proud owner of an original silver cover edition, it's barely believable that it's 40 years since this album saved the monster called Motörhead. To celebrate, Chiswick present an expanded version including B-sides, the *Beer Drinkers And Hell Raisers* EP, plus seven previously unreleased alternative mixes and out-takes, all annotated by Carroll.

Although the roller-coaster sound can be uneven and *The Watcher* still embedded in west London space-rock, *Motörhead* still sounds like the kamikaze rampage of desperate men granted one last shot, surging through speed-driven carnage to snatch triumph from oblivion. Highlights include *Lost Johnny*, *White Line Fever*, *Iron Horse/Born To Lose* and Johnny Burnette's pulverising *The Train Kept A-Rollin'*.

The album enabled Motörhead to go on to become one of the UK's biggest bands – but as this fine artefact reminds us, if not for Ted Carroll, the world may have continued without them, leaving rock a much tamer beast indeed.

Kris Needs

Ian Gillan

The Voice Of Deep Purple: The Gillan Years

STORE FOR MUSIC

Three-CD set of singer's often ingenious solo work.

It's very easy to forget how inventive and eclectic Ian Gillan was outside of Deep Purple. Listen to his solo work now and it's easy to imagine why he might have felt frustrated before he quit the band for the first time in June 1973. Though it wasn't just musical differences that drove him from Blackmore's side, as he'd admit later: "To understand what was going on in the band you'd need to be a trained psychologist. Everyone in the line-up behaved like an asshole – and I am including myself here."

Ian Gillan's departure from the band clearly let him off the creative leash, these three reissues (all with extraneous live Purple classics tagged on to the end) all shine in their own way. There's the Ian Gillan Band's *Scarabus* (1977); then 11 years later, Gillan & Glover's excellent *Accidentally On Purpose;* and, finally, 1990's *Naked Thunder,* credited to the singer alone, a year after leaving Deep Purple and probably surmising he was free of them at last.

Jazz-rock and fusion, power ballads, a handful of positive screamers – over three decades, the singer tested his mettle on seemingly everything that was thrown at him.

The dense swing of songs like the daring *Twin Exhausted* from *Scarabus* or the chiming *Telephone Box* from his sessions with his old Deep Purple bass-playing partner from *Accidentally On Purpose* to the charming *Loving On Borrowed Time* from *Naked Thunder*, Gillan would prove that not only was he a man of his times, but he also knew how to move with them.

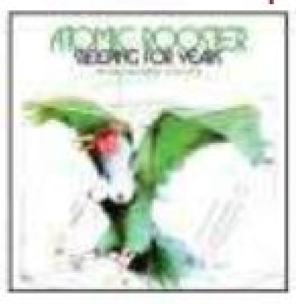
Philip Wilding

Atomic Rooster

Sleeping For Years: The Studio Recordings '70-'74

ESOTERIC

Four-disc encapsulation of undervalued prog pioneers.



Crawling from the wreckage of the Crazy World Of Arthur Brown, Atomic Rooster started life as a three-piece proto-prog powerhouse featuring keyboard wizard Vincent Crane and prodigious percussionist Carl Palmer, with the band fronted by bassist, flautist and vocalist Nick Graham.

Their uncompromisingly experimental debut (released just two months into the 70s) promised much, yet despite the band topping live bills over Deep Purple, it was largely overlooked outside of the underground. Crane eventually bowed to convention and recruited a guitarist, losing first Graham, then Palmer (who, replicating the original Rooster template, struck gold with ELP).

Playing the bass parts on Hammond, Crane kept his Rooster slim, and their second album, *Death Walks Behind You* (with John Du Cann on lead vocals and guitar, and Paul Hammond on drums) was to be their magnum opus. Featuring the gutsy, driving hit single *Tomorrow Night* and now augmented by career-defining follow-up anthem *Devil's Answer*, *Death Walks* deserves to be an integral part of any serious prog fan's collection.

In Hearing saw the band expanded to a quartet with Pete French taking on vocals, but the arrival of glam, Crane's ongoing battle with depression and a revolving door recruitment policy saw their fortunes falter.

Chris Farlowe gave overwrought voice to a decidedly funkier *Made In England*, but by 1973, *Nice 'N' Greasy*'s Hammond-laced, muscular blues-shout workouts started sounding positively archaic.

In their day, Atomic Rooster sat comfortably alongside Sabbath, Heep and Purple as early architects of what was to become metal, but their unsatisfying story ended tragically with Crane's suicide in 1989.

Ian Fortnam

Stack Waddy

So Who The Hell Is Stack Waddy?

CHERRY RED

Peel-championed Manc proto-punkers.

Named after a *Mad* magazine character in the summer of 1969, Manchester's Stack Waddy were magnificently shambolic R&B evangelists who unintentionally predicted punk, whether by throwing up on policemen, singer John Knail leaping offstage to hammer distracted punters, or with their

MOTÖRHEAD: GETTY

back issues: storemags.com

gloriously primal regurgitations of the Bo Diddley songbook.

Impressed by their spot at Buxton's blues festival, John Peel signed the relentlessly sozzled band to his Dandelion label, releasing their raw trawl through Bo Diddley's *Roadrunner* as 1971's debut single, followed by the self-titled first album he produced as Eddie Lee Beppeaux. Amid searing R&B chestnuts, they demolished Tull's *Love Story*, rogered Cyril Davies' *Country Line Special* and, at Peel's suggestion, booglarised Beefheart's *Sure 'Nuff 'N Yes I Do.*

By the time Peel wrote liner notes for 1972's *Bugger Off*, the band had already disintegrated, leaving mankind another steaming dollop of primal R&B, this time laced with scathing covers of *Willie The Pimp*, *You Really Got Me* and *The Girl From Ipanema*, alongside their own *Meat Pies 'Ave Come But Band's Not Here Yet*.

Stack Waddy's well-deserved monument comes with a bonus disc of out-takes and a steaming BBC In Concert session – all clad in a cardboard slipcase that, almost symbolically, soon falls apart.

Kris Needs

Bring Me The Horizon

2003-2014 EPITAPH

From deathcore to electronica in just over a decade.

You might want to look away now, but the fact is that Bring Me The Horizon are the biggest thing to come out of Sheffield since Joe Elliot and his band started making eyes at the USA.

For those who have pointedly started reading your paper every time someone's mentioned the words 'death' or 'grindcore', BMTH used to revel in making a sound like a car catching its gears on an icy hill. Their earlier albums, 2006's *Count Your Blessings* and the follow-up *Suicide Season* (combined with an attitude that could best be described as 'cocky') polarised fans and infuriated the music press.

That didn't blunt their ardour though. Their third album, 2010's *There Is A Hell...* was a revelation in songwriting and tone. *It Never Ends* and *Blessed With A Curse*, both revisited here, are a sensational and bravura mix of flinty rough edges and bold melodies.

However, it was to be 2013's *Sempiternal* where their dogged antagonism was completely matched by their songwriting smarts on tracks like *Go To Hell, For Heaven's Sake* and the indomitable *Can You Feel My Heart*.

Just like Leppard, they're fast becoming one of the UK's biggest exports.

Philip Wilding

Hammerfall

Glory To The Brave 20-Year Anniversary Edition NUCLEAR BLAST

Power metal epic gets a birthday update.

When the earth finally plunges into the sun, the only thing left standing in those final moments will be cockroaches and Scandinavians in lace-up leather trousers singing about valiant warriors and despicable dragons.

Since its inception in the 80s, power metal has proudly become the genre that refuses to die, wielding its uncoolness like a gigantic battle axe. Even if you can't stomach the bombast, you have to admire its tenacity.

Hammerfall didn't write the rule book, but they've spent several decades following it to the letter. Their debut album – released 20 years ago, and fortified here with a scattering of lively, if inessential, radio edits and live tracks – is the soundtrack to an all-night Dungeons & Dragons marathon.

The loin-girding likes of *Metal Age*, *Steel On Steel* and *Hammerfall* itself are trad metal given a 90s update: choral, anthemic, over the top. Even when they dial back the phallic sword-waving on *I Believe* and the title track, it's as delicate as a malfunctioning trebuchet.

Subtle? No. Ridiculous? In places. Admirable in its stubbornness? Indisputably, and thank Odin for that.

Dave Everley

Sonja Kristina

Anthology CHERRY RED

Double-CD retrospective charts curveball career.

Renowned as Curved Air's singer, Sonja Kristina has dabbled in a parallel solo oeuvre, from which she's personally compiled this first ever best-of selection. In the 60s she starred onstage in *Hair*, replaced Sandy Denny in Strawbs for one gig, then joined Curved Air while working as a Playboy Club croupier. In the early 70s she routinely won Best Female Vocalist polls. Later she became a university music tutor.

A rich life, then, and the music here displays her restless versatility and desire to sample different styles. It's hard to find a unifying theme, until you realise that her unerringly confident voice is a reassuring companion in any genre.

From hippiedom to punk, from psychedelia to acid folk, she's stepped through any looking glass offered. There's an acoustic version of Motörhead's *I Don't Believe A Word*, a new Greg Lake tribute (*C'est La Vie*) and a bombastic blast of Carl Orff (with Curved Air ally Darryl Way). Yet it's when she's doing her own thing – notably on her 1980 solo debut – that the sounds offer the most sensitivity and seduction.

Full Time Woman and *Man He Colour* enchant, as does 1995's *Angel*. She bends any music to her will.

Chris Roberts

XTC

Black Sea APE HOUSE

Prog-pop, post-punk, art-rock hybrid receives a well-deserved expanded reappraisal.

In the interests of full disclosure, and at the risk of undermining the *CR* reviews section's avowed intent of critical infallibility, there was a brief time when I did not particularly care for *Black Sea*. On its initial release I shared a house with an XTC fan who, quite literally, never stopped playing it.

Arriving into the post-punk landscape of proudly ham-fisted non-craftsman, it flaunted finely tooled baroque'n'roll aspirations more readily associated with latter-day Beatles than the worthy Emperor's-new-rain-mac ineptitude of their dour indie contemporaries. *Black Sea*'s meticulous arrangements, lyrical invention, wit and succession of earworms seemed almost counter-revolutionary in their pop perfection.

To ears attuned to the fervid brutality of the Pistols and the instinctive savant passion of Joy Division, XTC were just too clever for their own good. Every chord sounded wilfully obtuse, each brilliance-flaunting couplet merely contrived to irritate. Moving out was only a relief.

Within the week, entirely unable to dislodge the earworms, or live another second without the opening clarion riff of *Respectable Street*; 'help' of *Sgt. Rock*; irresistibly barbed 'woah-oh's of *Living Through Another Cuba*; the compound crescendoes of *No Language In Our Lungs*; or the inspiring, if unlikely, tribute to the never-never-navvies of *Towers Of London* – I acquired a *Black Sea* of my own. I had no choice. I couldn't live without it. Irritating or not, it's a stone-cold classic, and it still owns me more than I own it.

So 5.1-savvy prog remixer du jour Steven Wilson had better have stepped up to the plate, because when it comes to cows, there are none more sacred than this. Thankfully, 2017's mixes of both stereo and surround variety are excellent – Wilson didn't get where he is today by taking issue with time-honoured perfection. Aside from added crispness, clarity and positioning in the round, there are no unwelcome surprises here. However, the all-important second disc with its 5.1 mix and additional extras (videos, instrumentals, demos et al) is a Blu-ray, so won't play in DVD 5.1 players.

Just as generous a package as you'd expect from Ape House, this is a lovingly produced definitive edition of an album you'll undervalue at your peril. Still not getting it? Give it time.

Ian Fortnam

The Yardbirds

Yardbirds '68 JIMMYPAGE.COM

Plant-free proto-Zep. What wonders might have been, eh, readers?

As historical rock documents go, there are few quite as significant as this. These 18 tracks, spread across two discs, capture the final four-piece Jimmy Page-led line-up of The Yardbirds in performance and studio experimentation, as the 24-year-old guitarist coaxed drummer Jim McCarty, bassist Chris Dreja and vocalist Keith Relf toward a musical vision he'd ultimately only realise with Led Zeppelin.

In many ways, this is Zeppelin lite – and, arguably, the better for it. But before we embark on sacrilege, let's consider specifics. Disc one captures a newly remixed version of a March '68 live recording from NYC's Anderson Theater (originally released by Epic in '71 as *Live Yardbirds: Featuring Jimmy Page*). In this incarnation it's sadly stripped of the original's between-song banter, though it's audibly crisper.

Disc two corrals contemporaneous studio sketches, hitherto confined to bootlegs – not least *Knowing That I'm Losing You*, an instrumental take on *Zep III's Tangerine* (with Plant's eventual vocal line mapped out on pedal steel).

Also present is a gutsy reading of Jerry Ragovoy and Mort Shuman's *My Baby* (latterly forever associated with Janis Joplin after its inclusion on her posthumous *Pearl* album), and the acoustic-driven *Spanish Blood*, with spoken-word atmosphere courtesy of McCarty. *Avron Knows'* riff bowls along, hinting at future heaviness, while Relf's parping harp kicks along a ferocious romp through live Yardbirds staple *Drinking Muddy Water*.

Yet the main attraction here is the live set. While pre-Page-era stalwarts predominate (*Train Kept A-Rollin'*, *Heart Full Of Soul*, *Over Under Sideways Down*, *Shapes*…), actual things to come are represented in *White Summer* – its instrumental Indian/Arabic nuances latterly incorporated into Zeppelin as a whole, and *Over The Hills And Far Away* specifically – and *Dazed And Confused*.

The latter, featuring Page's cello-bowed solo, is almost there, but lacking one key ingredient: the young Robert Plant and his towering machismo. It was Plant's priapic howl that made a Zeppelin of the Yardbirds' next line-up, and though Relf was technically incapable of taking Page's next step, he had a measured vocal restraint that some – and judging by recent pronouncements, even today's Plant – might have preferred in a Zeppelin vocalist.

Ian Fortnam

The Doors

Absolutely Live ELEKTRA

Take a little road trip.

Aside from being reissued on limited-edition midnight-blue vinyl, this remains the "organic documentary" that The Doors and producer Paul A. Rothchild envisaged.

Recorded at various East Coast venues and two Monday night shows at the Aquarius Theatre in Los Angeles between August 1969 and June '70, *Absolutely Live* captured The Doors on the rebound from Jim Morrison's Miami bust, right before they recorded *Morrison Hotel*.

It remains captivating with the band's technical excellence highlighted by a rough R&B approach in places as they ditch psychedelia and give Jim his head on spectacular versions of *When The Music's Over* and the *Alabama Song* medley, climaxing in a crunching *Five To One*.

The real draws here are the otherwise unreleased material. Bo Diddley's *Who Do You Love* sets that scene, but *Love Hides* and the moody *Universal Mind*, where Morrison confronts his public image, are key songs. Best of all is the *Dead Cats, Dead Rats* rap, which addresses the Days Of Rage riots that ripped through Chicago.

The Celebration Of The Lizard finally appears and proves to be a transcendent performance-art marvel. The only downside is Ray Manzarek's boisterous take on Willie Dixon's *Close To You*. The rest is peachy, though. Give the singer some.

Max Bell

Glenn Hughes

Reissues CHERRY RED

Versatile ex-Purpler's early-noughties sets, plus live cuts.

The title of 'hardest-working man in rock'n'roll' is a hotly contested one, but Glenn Hughes is at the head of the pack in the Seniors section.

The former Trapeze and Deep Purple bassist/vocalist, one-time KLF guest vocalist and now, once again, Black Country Communion frontman has rarely been busier. And his reissued back catalogue is currently doing even more profile-pumping.

These 2001 and 2003 albums rock pretty hard in remastered form, all lithe bluesy riffs and Gillan-ish howl. Opener *Inside* on *Building The Machine* (**7/10**) is a storming funk-rock highlight, and other uptempo rockers predominate as ever, making the slow-building *Feels Like Home* a welcome pace-breaker. The eight-minute *Written All Over Your Face* performs a similarly welcome anthemic task on *Songs In The Key Of Rock* (**7/10**).

The extras are hardly essential, but not just filler either, as live cuts like a pounding reading of the Purps' *Stormbringer*, bonus tracks such as the high-octane *Change* (enjoyable despite the title being sung as if it's 'Cake!') and interview-based liner notes from *CR*'s own Malcolm Dome complete two tidy packages.

Johnny Sharp

Luther Allison

A Legend Never Dies: Essential Recordings 1976-1997 RUF

Late Chicago blues giant gets a colossal monument.

Born in 1939 sharecropping Arkansas but coming of age in Chicago's blues niteries, Luther Allison followed the classic path of struggling in his home country, then relocating to Europe after enjoying its receptive audiences.

An exceptional, relentlessly impassioned singer-guitarist who wrote his own songs, Allison already had a name from the albums he'd released since 1969, including three as Motown's first blues signing.

After moving to France in 1983, his recording career took off, boosted by his agent starting Ruf Records to release him, and organising his return to the US to record 1993's *Bad Love*, 1996's *Blue Streak* and 1997's sublime finale *Reckless*. They join 1992's riveting unplugged peak, *Hand Me Down My Moonshine*, and others in this handsome box set marking the 20th anniversary of his death from cancer in 1997.

After returning to the US, Allison won armfuls of blues awards, gigged relentlessly and jammed with fellow giants, hailed as 'the Bruce Springsteen of the blues' thanks to his ability to expand its themes to address cutting-edge social conditions.

The set also includes four DVDs, a .45 of his blistering take on the Stones' *You Can't Always Get What You Want* and a memorabilia-stacked book.

Kris Needs

THE YARDBIRDS: GEMA/ICONICPIX

Five Finger Death Punch

A Decade Of Destruction

ELEVEN SEVEN MUSIC

21st-century metal: a lot like 80s and 90s metal.

Peel back Five Finger Death Punch's modern metal trappings and you'll find a straight-down-the-line rock band underneath. This much is evidenced by the cover of Bad Company's *Bad Company* that appears on this 'best of' album, which tastefully notches up the heaviness rather than galumphing all over it with titanium-plated guitar.

Bad Company is an apt choice for Five Finger Death Punch – the Las Vegas band have positioned themselves as modern-day outlaws, six-string rebels sticking it to the establishment.

They walk it like they talk it on *Trouble* and *Lift Me Up* – the latter featuring a cameo from Rob Halford – setting Ivan Moody's warthog bellow on concrete foundations.

However, there's an unlikely musical conservatism to *The Bleeding* and the billowing *Battle Born*, which owes as much to early Nickelback or prime Queensrÿche as it does Slayer or Metallica. Best of all is *Gone Away*, which is essentially an 80s power ballad in army camo drag.

It's at moments like this – when they let the tough-guy mask slip and stop beating their chests to assert their alpha maleness – that Five Finger Death Punch are at their most intriguing. It's a side you wish they'd explore more in future.

Dave Everley

The Residents

Meet The Residents / The Third Reich 'N Roll

CHERRY RED

The best and worst of the San Francisco art-rockers reissued.

"*Meet The Residents* was not rock, not classical, not blues and not jazz [...] some who heard it thought it wasn't music at all," say the sleeve-notes to the reissue of the phenomenal 1974 debut album from The Residents.

It's difficult to explain in 2017 the impact *Meet The Residents* (**9/10**) had upon those few of us fortunate to hear it in 1977. The Residents weren't interested in traditional forms of expression or recording techniques – although the anonymous, eyeball-sporting San Francisco art-rock outsiders clearly had a morbid dislike for The Beatles.

Much of this debut album is screaming and distortion and uncanny disorientating vocal sounds, and always that tinny piano and sense of wrongness.

Unbearably sad in places, unbearably funny, every now and then the album would break out into bona fide deconstruction. The rampant jagged groove of *N-Er-Gee (Crisis Blues)* is what Zappa could have sounded like if he'd been any fucking good at all; the lamenting *Smelly Tongues* melts hearts 40 years on.

Seasoned Greetings and *Spotted Pinto Queen* hint at the unparalleled heights the band would later (earlier?) reach on *Not Available*. So beautiful, so forlorn, so unaccountably brilliant.

The reissue comes with a bonus mono mix and oodles of rubbish/brilliance, including the legendary *Santa Dog* EP, which is an absolute stone-cold classic.

During the 1970s, The Residents released four of the greatest albums known to eyeball – *Meet...*, *Not Available*, the fantastically realised *Commercial Album*, and the ultimate Inuit soundtrack, *Eskimo*. They also released two of the worst – the disco remix of *Eskimo (Diskomo)* and *The Third Reich 'N Roll* (**2/10**), a pastiche of 1950s rock'n'roll with a Nazi leitmotif. It was worse than it sounds.

Recordings of classic songs were ripped apart and reassembled with no effort whatsoever. The result? Whoa.

You'll still want to buy this reissue, though, because it contains the creepiest version of the Stones' *Satisfaction* ever committed to vinyl.

It's got a fucking amazing sleeve as well.

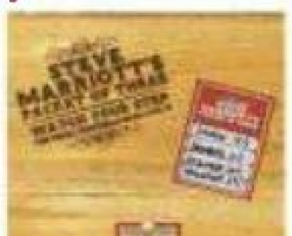
Everett True

Steve Marriott's Packet Of Three

Watch Your Step – The Final Performances Live '91

LEMON RECORDINGS

Manor Park's finest caught just before his death.



It's become easy in recent years to damn Steve Marriott with faint praise, or to overlook him altogether. Small Faces fans and Humble Pie heads will demur, but his one-time fame has evaporated. Sad, because these four final shows – at the Half Moon, London; Logo in Hamburg; Dieselstrasse in Esslingen; and Sinkkasten, Frankfurt – taped three months before his death in a house fire in Essex, indicate that if he wasn't doing anything new, then at least the old template wasn't broken.

His familiar rasp and classy guitar work grace sets that duplicate each other but still thrill once favourites like *Itchycoo Park, Watcha Gonna Do About It* and the immortal *All Or Nothing* barge in, raising a smile and triggering happy memories.

All the CDs kick off with an instrumental version of *Memphis, Tennessee* and sign off with the Pie's *Natural Born Bugie*, so cherry picking is in order.

Marriott's R&B chops are best heard on his soulful *Mr. Pitiful*, since his knowledge of that genre was impeccable. Some of the rest is too knockabout, though, meaning this little packet of four is one for the diehards only.

Shortly after these shows, Marriott hooked up with Peter Frampton, but their reunion was doomed. That's the story of Steve Marriott's life.

Max Bell

King Crimson

Sailors' Tales

PANEGYRIC

Three overlooked KC albums make up the core of this lavish box set.

Robert Fripp and King Crimson spent a career shrugging off the criticism 'overblown'. That said, you'd be hard pushed to think of this expansive (and that word is underselling it somewhat) box set as being anything but. King Crimson have a recent history of reappraising their past in the most accomplished manner (in collections like these and as a born again live band). This grouping of their difficult and mostly underperformed trilogy of records from the start of the 70s – *In The Wake Of Poseidon*, *Lizard* (both released in 1970) and *Islands* (1971) – is a lavish reminder of the potency of King Crimson, even in an era where they were beset by intra-band barracking and considered to be at a low creative ebb.

Admittedly, those records were sandwiched between their spectacular debut and the defining *Larks' Tongues In Aspic*, so it's little surprise that they sometimes get lost in the past when people riffle through their catalogue. This 27-disc set (no, your glasses haven't slipped off your nose – there are 27 discs) should help the reappraisal, and the Fripp/Steven Wilson remixes of the original material won't hurt either.

That and the glorious din that are the live discs that make up the heart of this set. Discs 4 through 17 are an extended tracking shot of a band in rehearsal and live across the world. And like most bands that live on the road, there are some good nights and some not so good nights.

It's a rapture, though, an immersive journey into a world where the varying King Crimson line-ups might have been falling apart off stage, but occasionally tuning in to the universe and singing the song of the heavens when they were on it.

The rehearsal tapes (appended as 'Bonus Discs' for some reason) are a raucous mesh of noise and then stabs of brilliant invention that cut through like a radio signal coming out of white noise.

The unpublished photographs, nuanced liner notes and, deliciously, a download code for yet another concert (Hyde Park, 1971) not only reaffirm Fripp's tenacity to keep creating and doing things in his own way, but to also frame those moments, hold them forever and see them sparkling in the light.

Philip Wilding

KING CRIMSON: PRESS

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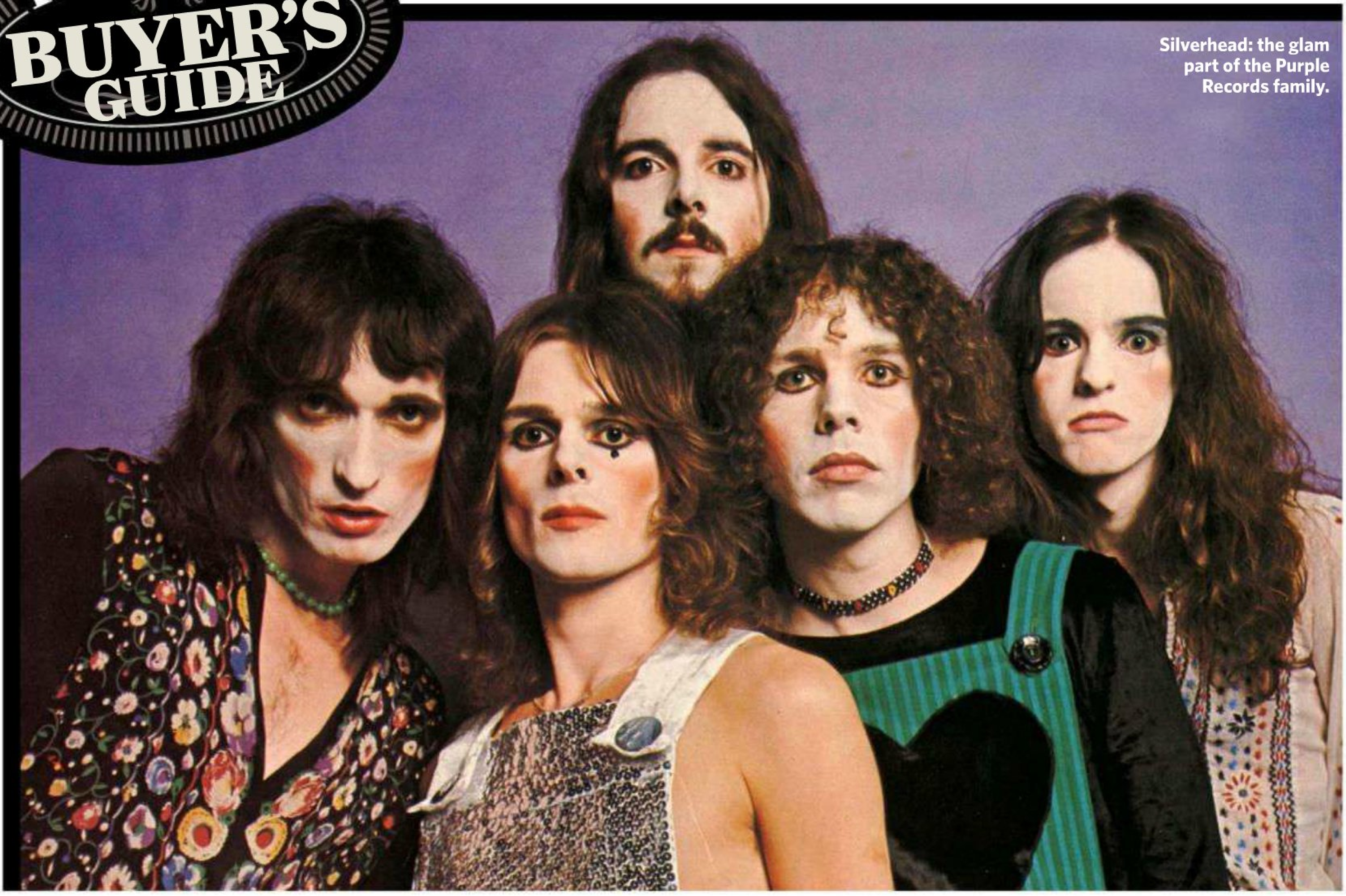
THE HARD STUFF BUYER'S GUIDE



Silverhead: the glam part of the Purple Records family.

Purple Records

The most eclectic and eccentric of all rock band vanity projects, Deep Purple's label went from the Cov to, er, Colditz.

It was the ultimate vanity project for a top band to launch their own record label back in the 1960s and 70s. Besides adding a highfalutin credence to material issued by the central act, it was also an opportunity to offer exposure to exciting discoveries, promising hopefuls and, er… old mates down on their luck/the pub who were having a bit of trouble paying their rent and/or dealer. Led Zeppelin had Swan Song with Maggie Bell and Detective. Emerson Lake & Palmer had Manticore with Stray Dog (featuring super-guitarist Snuffy '*The West Wing*' Walden) and Italian proggers PFM. The Beatles had Apple with Badfinger and James Taylor. Jefferson Airplane had Grunt with Hot Tuna and Papa John Creach. T.Rex had The T.Rex Wax Co. with, er… T.Rex. The list goes on.

Deep Purple's management, industry legends John Coletta and Tony Edwards, launched Purple Records in 1971, and the venture lasted until '79. The label was arguably one of the most eccentric and eclectic of these aforementioned vanity projects. If Purple Records had an A&R man, he must have been at the very best insane, at the very worst deaf. (We used to call 'em Um&Er men back in the day, which explains a lot.) So, after their links with Harvest Records, the increasingly mighty Deep Purple went about releasing albums and singles via the still EMI-endorsed Purple Records. And all was well and good. But the headline-band releases were punctuated by a seemingly random grab-bag of guff by artists such as Rupert Hine, Carol Hunter, The Bumbles, Jon 'Doctor Who' Pertwee and, of course, Gnasher. But don't get us wrong. Beyond the craziness and confusion there were Purple Records positives – and positives aplenty.

Here we boldly separate the wheat from the chaff and celebrate what was, and remains, so great about this determinedly individualistic old-school vinyl venture. But first, a few guidelines. We could have quite easily packed this list with product from the prime Purple movers (David Coverdale, Jon Lord et al) but with the aim of reflecting the diversity of the label we have decided to select just one album per artiste. So we mention Cov's *Northwinds* at the expense of *White Snake*, and Lord's *Gemini Suite* instead of *Windows* or *Sarabande*. And, oh yeah, Tucky Buzzard's *Allright On The Night* rather than *Buzzard*. In short, it's a throbbing Purple monster – and we're going in…

Geoff Barton

Essential Classics

David Coverdale

Northwinds *1978*

When in '76 this writer toured with Deep Purple – the ill-fated line-up with Tommy Bolin – singer David Coverdale confided that he was hoping to release a solo album. But embark on a solo *career*? Not so much. Nevertheless, following Purple Mk IV's implosion the frontman's hand was forced. He released the low-key *White Snake* in '77 and followed it up with the more assertive *Northwinds*. *Northwinds* was the blueprint for the bluestastic direction Cov would take with the early incarnation of his band Whitesnake (one word), the tracks co-written with guitarist Micky Moody – notably opener *Keep On Giving Me Love* – being the pick of a quality bunch.

Silverhead

Silverhead *1972*

If Deep Purple were the jewel in Purple Records' crown, then Silverhead were a tacky tiara in the window of Ratners. They were fronted by English toff-turned-street urchin Michael Des Barres, a man with more holler than Steve Marriott and loon pants with such voluminous legs they could be used as yurts. They were as cocksure as they come. And come they did, notably on *Ace Supreme*, a song about a lewd biker lord who *'wiped his kickstart clean'*. However they completely overstepped the mark with second album *16 And Savaged*, its tasteless cover depicting a dishevelled female teen gazing blankly into a backstage dressing-room mirror… you get the picture, no doubt.

Superior Reputation cementing

Roger Glover & Guests

The Butterfly Ball & The Grasshopper's Feast *1974*

What was/is Roger Glover's finest hour? *The Butterfly Ball*, a wholly unexpected Beatrix Potter moment; a warmhearted project with a characterful cast of animals and insects that enthralled six and sixty-year-olds alike. It wouldn't surprise us to hear that Disney had purloined the rights, such is its endearing, enduring, storytime appeal. *Love Is All*, the standout with Ronnie James Dio on vocals, is more uplifting than a helium-fuelled honeybee, and who can resist titles such as *Harlequin Hare* and *Magician Moth*? Even the most heartless headbanging bastard should be moved to tears.

Jon Lord

Gemini Suite *1972*

The creation of Purple Records gave the late Jon Lord the chance to orchestrate a solo career parallel to DP – 'orchestrate' being the operative word. The classically minded keysman released this album along with 1974's *Windows* and 1976's *Sarabande* before the label folded. *Gemini Suite*'s lengthy movements were inspired by Purple's instrumental set-up: guitar, piano, drums. When *…Suite* made its live debut in '70 all five Purps were involved; however for this studio version Ritchie Blackmore and Ian Gillan were mysteriously absent. Albert Lee stepped in for Blackmore, while Gillan's place was taken by both Tony Ashton and Yvonne Elliman.

Elf

Carolina County Ball *1974*

The finger of fate is a fickle digit. One cannot help but wonder what might have happened if Ronnie James Dio's Elf had not signed to Purple Records and been produced by Purple bassist Roger Glover. Guitarist Ritchie Blackmore would arguably have been unaware of Dio's immense talents, employing a different singer to get his Rainbow project off the ground. Despite some characteristically peerless singing from Dio The Younger, *Carolina County Ball* – Elf's second album of three – is a humdrum beast, full of workaday blues-infused rock'n'roll. But check out the title of track No.7: *Rainbow*. Ritchie *must* have been listening.

Curtiss Maldoon

Curtiss Maldoon *1971*

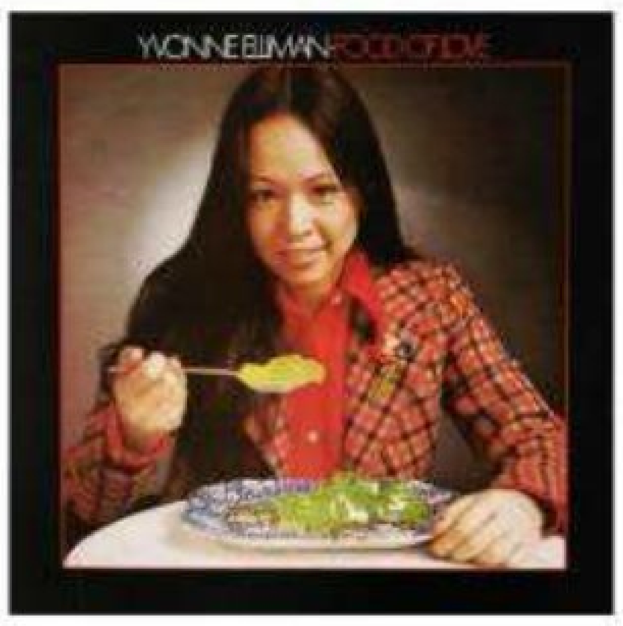
Curtiss Maldoon might sound like a character from a *Harry Potter* novel but a closer comparison might be Mulligan and O'Hare, Vic and Bob's eccentric folk-music duo. The name is an amalgam of twin vocalists Dave Curtiss – briefly a member of pre-Purple band Roundabout – and Clive Muldoon. Sounding like a mix of Medicine Head and McGuinness Flint they're best enjoyed after a large bong hit or whatever the *Man From Afghanistan* had in the bottom of his suitcase. Holy shit, what's this track called *Sepheryn*? After a bit of rewriting it was recorded by none other than Madonna as the title track of her 1998 album *Ray Of Light*.

Good Worth exploring

Hard Stuff

Bulletproof *1972*

Originally called Daemon, then Bullet, Hard Stuff featured guitarist John Du Cann and drummer Paul Hammond from Atomic Rooster, along with Quatermass bassist John Gustafson. They changed their name to avoid confusion with a US band already called Bullet and released *Bulletproof* in '72. Their music is unsurprisingly very Rooster-esque, a dense blend of hard rock and prog but with none of the commercial nous that enabled the Atomic ones to score hits such as *The Devil's Answer*. The band received plenty of live exposure supporting Deep Purple and released second album *Bolex Dementia* in '73. But audiences failed to warm to their Stuff.



Yvonne Elliman

Food Of Love *1973*

Ever wondered what kind of meal Slimer from *Ghostbusters* might serve up on *Celebrity Masterchef*? Well, Elliman appears to be eating it on the cover of this album. The Hawaiian singer gained fame as Mary Magdalene in *Jesus Christ Superstar* and her pure-as-the-driven voice always shines through on this odd selection of songs. Tracks such as *Casserole Me Over* and *Muesli Dreams* might echo the album's title but they're hardly gourmet listening. A sweet version of The Who's *Can't Explain* redresses the balance (Pete Townshend guests on the album) while *Bat Out Of Hell* fanatics will be intrigued by the wistful *Happy Ending*, written by a budding young composer, Jim Steinman.

Tucky Buzzard

Allright On The Night *1973*

Sporting the second weirdest Purple Records moniker after Curtiss Maldoon, Tucky Buzzard were formed by ex-members of British psychedelic pop group The End. Produced by the Stones' Bill Wyman, *Allright On The Night* was their fourth album, but their first for Purple. If shambolic boogie-fuelled blues rock is your thing – think Status Quo duking it out with Stack Waddy in a back-alley scuffle – then the Buzzard will ruffle your feathers. But this kind of music was two-a-penny in the early 70s and sounds alarmingly dated. Keysman Nicky Graham went on to write for The Nolans, Bros and Ant & Dec, and guitarist Terry Taylor currently plays with Bill Wyman's Rhythm Kings.

Avoid

Various

Colditz Breakpoint! *1973*

This bonkers record was devised by Major PR Reid, author of books *The Colditz Story* and *The Latter Days Of Colditz*, and technical adviser to the popular *Colditz* TV series of the 1970s. If you ever wondered what it would be like to be a British soldier in a WW2 German prisoner-of-war camp situated within a castle near Leipzig – let's face it, haven't we all – then this album recaptured the experience, sort of, via sound effects of swooping Spitfires, rumbling tanks, Nazi SS types shouting "Achtung!" and so on. Warning: this album also contains Gracie Fields, Max Wall and Arthur Askey. Ai-thang-yew and goodnight.

Essential Playlist

Ace Supreme
Silverhead

Rolling With My Baby
Silverhead

Keep On Giving Me Love
Northwinds

Queen Of Hearts
Northwinds

Love Is All
The Butterfly Ball & The Grasshopper's Feast

Rainbow
Carolina County Ball

Carolina County Ball
Carolina County Ball

Can't Live Without It
Allright On The Night

Time Will Be Your Doctor
Allright On The Night

Sinister Minister
Bulletproof

Sarabande
Sarabande

Can't Explain
Food Of Love

Happy Ending
Food Of Love

Man From Afghanistan
Curtiss Maldoon

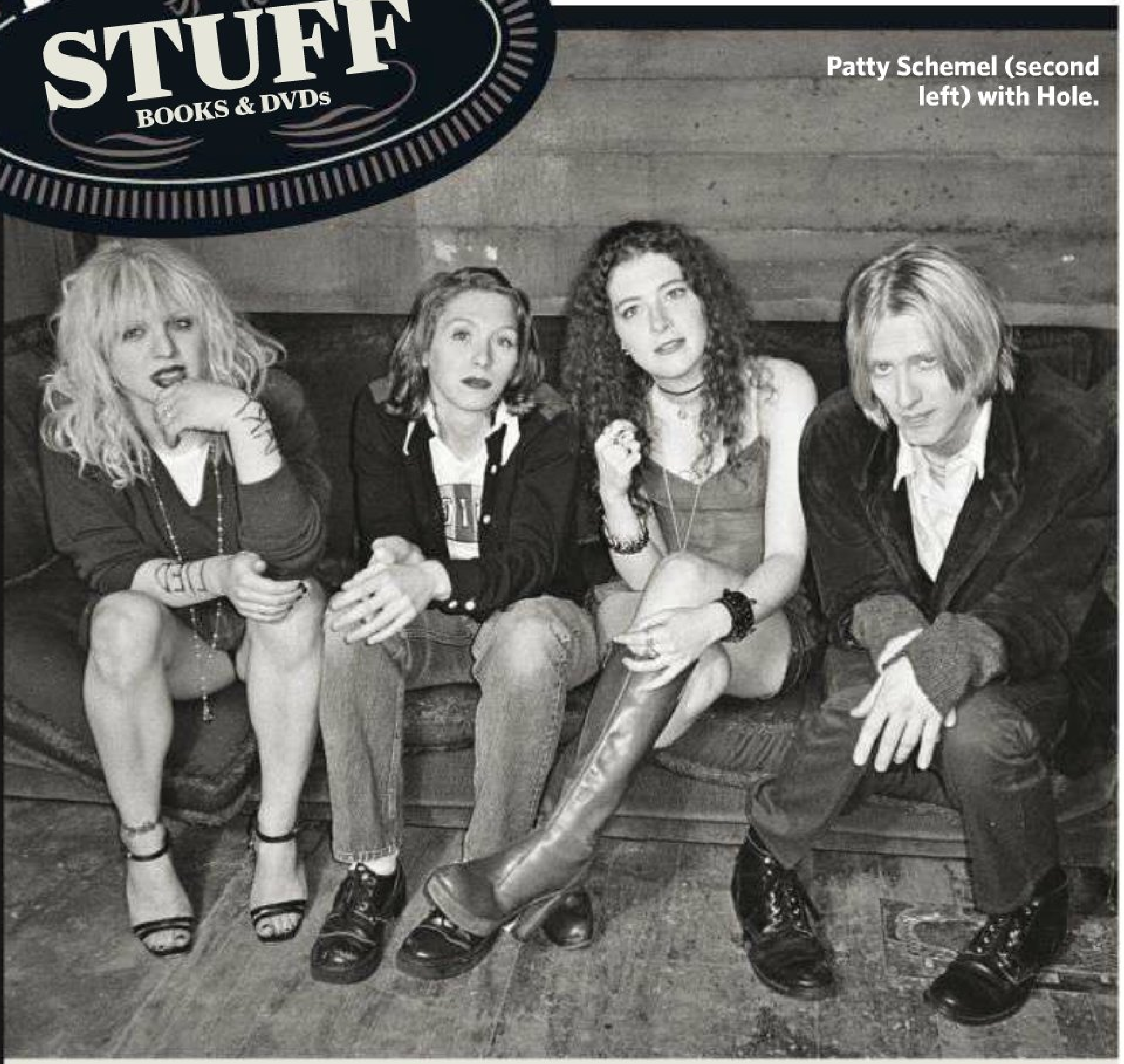
Sepheryn
Curtiss Maldoon

Medina Road
Gnasher

Hamburgers
Rupert Hine

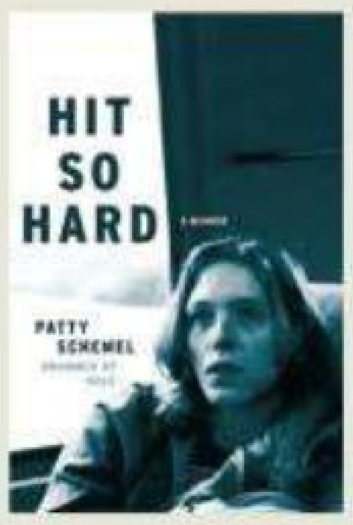
Sepheryn
Curtiss Maldoon

back issues: storemags.com


Patty Schemel (second left) with Hole.

Hit So Hard

Patty Schemel *DA CAPO*



Former Hole drummer's "beautiful memoir" is an open book.

Patty Schemel was the second (and main) drummer with Hole – "the best musician in that band", as Kurt Cobain termed it. She could (can) hit the drums hard. Real hard. As a person she was blunt, no-nonsense and sadly proved prone to addiction. She was a blast to be around. She had a keen sense of humour and an ability to turn a bad situation to good. She knew who she was and why she was doing it. She did not suffer fools, or those who favoured the male gender.

She is unflinching in her description of the recording process with Hole, Kurt Cobain's suicide, the death of bandmate Kristen Pfaff, her descent into a life of homelessness and crime on the streets of Los Angeles. She lived with Kurt and Courtney and was a confidante. And although this book is always open, detailed and with a wealth of the insider information you would expect, at no point does it feel like she's betrayed those confidences. And she has a great turn of phrase: "Kurt was like a sister trapped in a brother's body. He had a feminine side, and with his stomach issues he often looked like he was in the throes of menstrual aches."

Schemel was young when she joined Hole, but well-versed in the rock'n'roll lifestyle – she started drinking at the age of 11, and was already part of the Seattle/Olympia scene of the early 1990s through her band Sybil and punk rock connections. Here she is, detailing her first meeting with singer Courtney Love at all-ages punk venue Jabberjaw:

"What kind of drugs do you do?" Courtney asked first thing.

"Speed, I guess. And alcohol," I said, leaving out the rest of the truth. "But I don't play when I'm fucked up."

"Braggart. Do you want to be my drummer?" I told her I did.

She got fired from Hole eventually, for her perceived drug abuse (the irony of which she notes in fine, caustic detail in the second half of this book). She was in love with a girl at the time. Her life accelerated downhill shortly after, fuelled by addiction. She got herself clean on March 1, 2005

Patty still plays music regularly – the only member of Hole from their glory days who does, as fellow bandmate Melissa Auf der Maur (Kristen's replacement) points out. She is a board member on the non-profit Rock 'N Roll Camp For Girls in California (where she lives with her wife and daughter). She tours, teaches and performs.

And this is a beautiful memoir.

Everett True

Working Class Man

Jimmy Barnes *HARPER COLLINS*

By his own admission, Jimmy Barnes "drank, smoked and snorted" his way through a lot of his life. Most is laid bare in this, his second volume of memoirs that follows on from 2016's *Working Class Boy*, which brutally documents his broken, poverty-stricken childhood in Glasgow and Adelaide, forming the man we read about here.

Working Class Boy picks up with Barnes fronting Cold Chisel, the Aussie band with which he became famous. It's gritty, often brutal yet wholly compelling. Life on the road in Australia in the 70s and 80s was tough, not helped by the drink, the drugs, the fights and the sex which went hand in hand with it.

As solo fame beckons, the excess heightens – Barnes mistaking a line of heroin for cocaine is particularly harrowing – and naturally everything falls apart. Fortunately redemption is at hand.

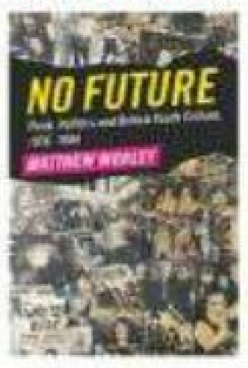
An unputdownable memoir from a man who walks it like he talks it.

Jerry Ewing

No Future: Punk, Politics And British Youth Culture 1976-84

Matthew Worley *CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS*

Excellent account of how punk articulated itself as a political as well as musical force.



In the mid-70s, the UK rock aristocracy's relationship with politics consisted of moaning about tax rates under Labour or, in Eric Clapton's case, dabbling in obnoxious racism. Punk was as much a reaction against this as much as against flares and lengthy keyboard solos; Rock Against Racism was formed in the wake of anti-immigrant remarks by Clapton.

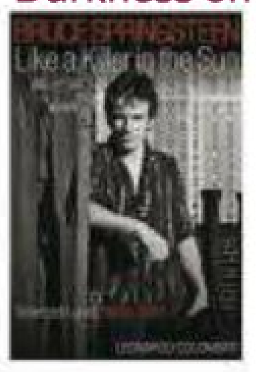
Matthew Worle's book explains how, despite its initial nihilism and fondness for swastikas, punk's ethos of DIY, local engagement and participation eventually resulted in a heightened political consciousness and a withering attention to both style and content. In a variety of ways, groups ranging from The Clash to The Au Pairs, Siouxsie to Crass sought to debunk rock's hoarier cliches and explore freer, more egalitarian modes of thinking. There hadn't been a rock moment quite like it before – there hasn't been one since.

David Stubbs

Bruce Springsteen – Like A Killer In The Sun: Selected Lyrics 1972-2017

Leonardo Colombati *BACKBEAT*

Darkness on the pages of tome.



Only a quarter of this 600-page brick of a book is devoted to reprinting Springsteen's actual song words, the rest is the Italian academic author's detailed critiques – and a great job he does too. Colombati dissects an interesting mix of The Boss's most iconic songs and hitherto less-heralded album tracks, placing them in the context of not just the musician's own experiences but also as part of a wider fabric of American culture and politics.

It works as a fascinating companion piece to *Born To Run*, Springsteen's own revelatory autobiography published last year; full of insight and historical information, written with passion and a lightness of touch that only occasionally lapses into dense academia.

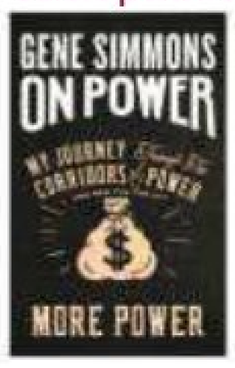
Film composer Ennio Morricone may seem an odd choice to write the foreword, but he identifies the filmic qualities of the musician's songs succinctly: "Each verse is a camera shot, each line is a scene."

Terry Staunton

Gene Simmons

On Power: My Journey Through The Corridors Of Power And How You Can Get More Power *DEY STREET*

The God of Thunder shares his sociopathic world view.



It's hard to know just how much of Gene Simmons's personality is a product of the nature/nurture axis, or perhaps it's a push-back against spending large chunks of one's adult life dressed as some sort of bat. Either way, his strident narcissism has long-since crossed the line from being a good copy generator into the realms of boorish egomaniac.

While it's hardly surprising – describing yourself as

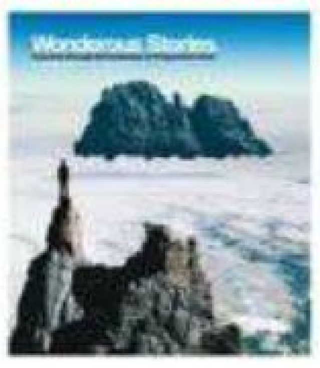
a "multihyphenate entrepreneur" on the jacket blurb, and having a previous book titled *Me, Inc* isn't exactly ambiguous – it's another thing to actually read this stuff in quantity. Rather than bolstering his central conceit that power is amoral, name-checking Machiavelli, Nietzsche, Frank Underwood and Dave Grohl (work ethic, okay?) only reinforces the feeling that ideas are being retroactively applied to fit the cut of his own peculiar jib. Predictably, examinations on the abuses and downsides of power are noticeable by their absence, and an abridged version – *Greed Is Good* – might have sufficed.

Tim Batcup

Wonderous Stories: A Journey Through The Landscape Of Progressive Rock

Jerry Ewing FLOOD GALLERY

Prog magazine editor literally writes the book.



Nobody is better qualified to Tarkus through the genre that wouldn't die and its sub-categories (from jazz-fusion to the art-rock of Roxy, 10cc, Japan) than Jerry Ewing. This colourful, chatty book, classily designed by Carl Glover (known for his artwork with Marillion and Steven Wilson), offers a history and health check of what Ian Anderson called "music for people who get bored easily", and also argues that the genre is still valid and vibrant.

Paying tribute to the Big Six – Floyd, Genesis, Yes, Tull, ELP and Crimson – it emphasises that none of these icons sound alike. The same applies to its defining albums, from Caravan's *In The Land Of Grey And Pink* to Rush's *A Farewell To Kings*.

Where prog came from is discussed (Ewing agrees with foreword writer Steve Hackett that "it hails from everywhere"), and so is where it's going. And it's going strong.

Entertaining, knowledgeable and essential.

Chris Roberts

Aerosmith: In Full Flight

Tony Mottram WYMER

Limited-edition collection of intimate photos of the band.

Photographer Tony Mottram shot shy, retiring wallflower Steven Tyler and the bad boys from Boston for *Sounds, Kerrang!* and other mags in the 80s and 90s. Usually only one or two shots from a session were used, so he had a surplus of candids. Many, ranging from plentiful live captures to off-stage poses – "You have to grab hold; sometimes it's your crotch, sometimes it's reality," offers the eloquent Tyler – are presented in this expensive hardback book, which lands in an oddly appropriate silver flight case. There are close-up, feel-the-sweat shots from the Marquee in 1990 with Jimmy Page guesting, and broader photos from the Monsters Of Rock festival. An eyebrow-raising session at the band's Wherehouse rehearsal studio shows Tyler laughing heartily as the Mottram sports a gigantic dildo found on site. You just don't get that kind of access with these Ed Sheerans the youngsters have nowadays.

Chris Roberts

100 Psychedelic Records From Brazil (1968-1975)

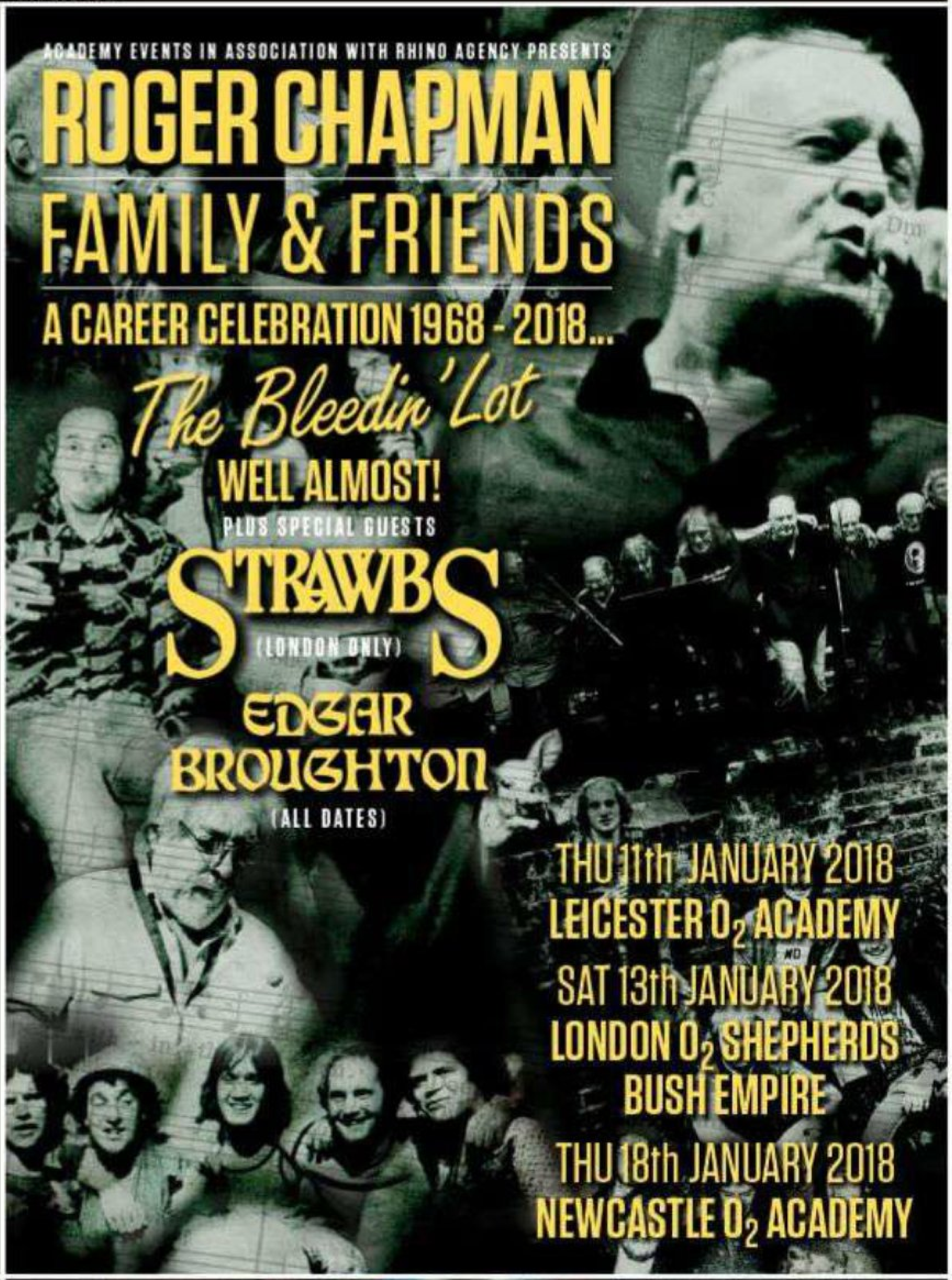
Bento Araujo POEIRA PRESS

Printed in both Portuguese and English, this is the perfect Christmas gift for the well-travelled psych fan whose knowledge of the Tropicalia movement and beyond starts and stops with Os Mutantes, Brazil's answer to late-period Beatles. Alongside classic albums by the likes of Gilberto Gil and Caetano Veloso (musicians exiled by Brazil's military dictatorship who ended up in London, jammed with Hawkwind, and actually headlined the second day of the 1970 Isle Of Wight Festival), you'll find biographies and often hallucinatory cover art from lesser-known acts such as Brazilian Octopus, Blow Up and, uhm, Liverpool.

It's fasinating stuff, but it would be remiss to examine such a book without snarkily drawing attention to an omission. So you have to wonder about the exclusion of Novos Baianos's revolutionary 1972 album *Acabou Chorare*, an astonishing mix of psychedelia and bossa nova that *Rolling Stone* once voted the best Brazilian rock album of all time.

Fraser Lewry

Academy Events present



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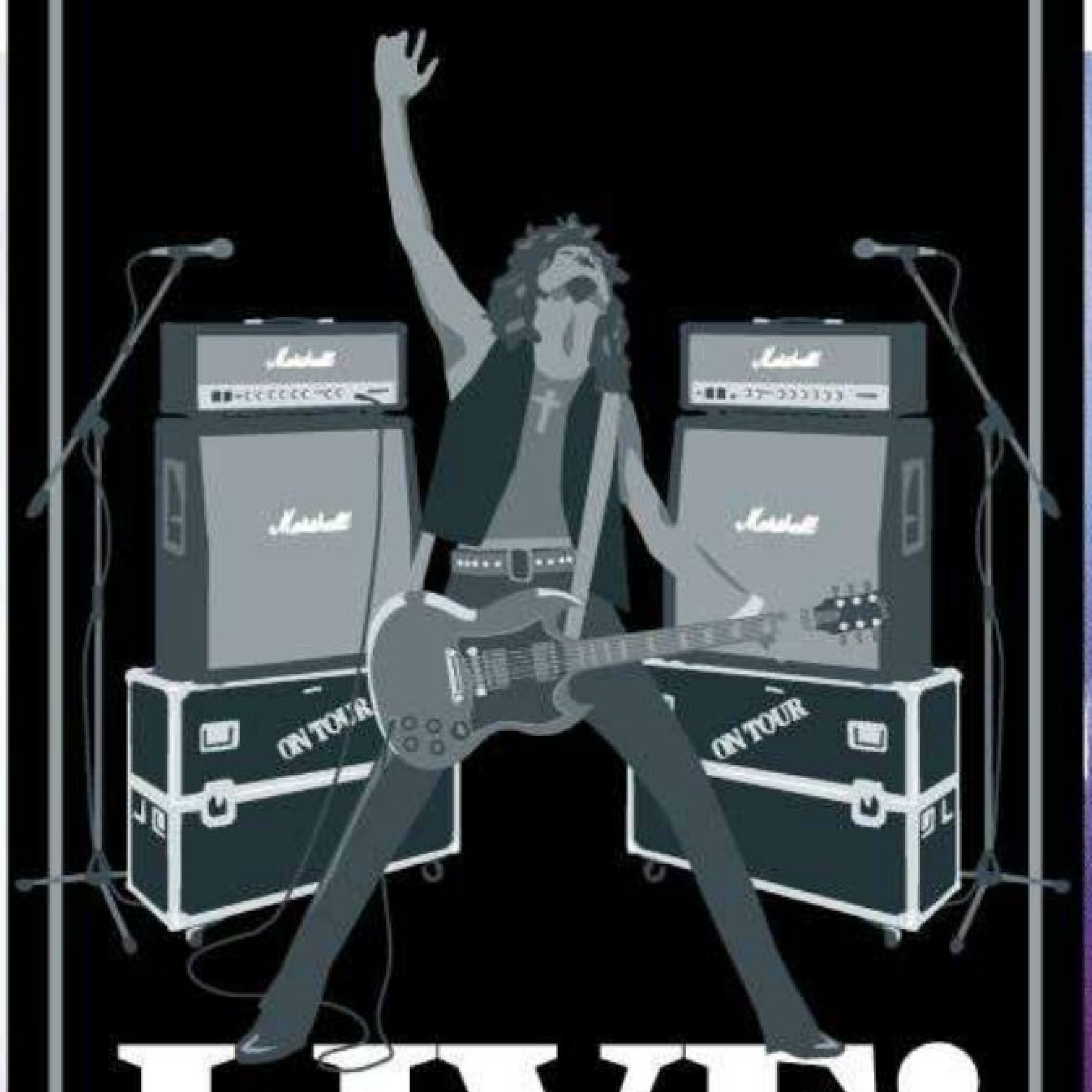


LIVE!

The High-Voltage What's On Guide

Edited by Ian Fortnam (Reviews) and Dave Ling (Tours)

P120

Queen + Adam Lambert

Are these rock royalty still killer live?

P108 Interviews
P111 Tour Dates
P114 Live Reviews

Black Country Communion

With four albums and some Purple material to pick from, Glenn and co are going deep.

With their disagreements of the past smoothed over, bassist/vocalist Glenn Hughes previews a pair of UK appearances for the album that many – including the group themselves – feared might never be made, Black Country Communion's *BCCIV*.

How are you following the recent show in Christchurch, New Zealand, that was curtailed due to dehydration?
Oh, I'm absolutely fine. I was fatigued and didn't drink enough water. An hour and 45 minutes into the show I went down but my tech caught me and I hobbled off like the Hunchback Of Notre Dame. Leaving the hospital the press were waiting for me, it felt like I was on *Dynasty* or something [laughs].

That same tour featured a repertoire of all-Deep Purple material – even the Gillan-era tunes *Highway Star* and *Smoke On The Water*.
I'd done those two with David [Coverdale] in Purple [Mark III] and was confident of pulling them off. I'd been offered several tours to honour the legacy of Deep Purple, who as everybody knows are coming to an end. I figured… maybe it's time. And it was fun to get back into character of my days with them, especially as I'm getting older. I'm looking back at my life and I want to remember the good stuff.

Was there any feedback from the current Purple? Are they cool with you doing it?
I'm not sure. But let's be clear: I'm not calling myself Deep Purple or trying to fool anybody, and it was something that I really enjoyed doing.

How would you describe Black Country Communion's current inter-band harmony?
Everything's fine. Some bad tweets were exchanged but there was never a time when Joe [Bonamassa, guitar/vocals] and I were not friends. And when we decided that the band would come back, it needed to be fucking epic, and I'm confident that *BCCIV* is the record that the situation demanded.

Just like being in a family, a dispute can clear the air and serve long term good.
Yeah, I agree. There really is no problem between Joe and I; he works bloody hard and deserves every bit of his success.

In *Classic Rock*'s recent cover story [issue 241], keyboardist Derek Sherinian complained that he and Jason Bonham had been "excluded from the songwriting process".
We needed to write this one toe-to-toe, with two chairs facing each other. So yeah, this album is a Glenn and Joe record. There's a lot of trust and love there between Joe and I, it's a really good friendship.

How much of *BCCIV* will be aired on tour?
That's being discussed, but don't forget there wasn't a chance to play the material from *Afterglow* [2012] because it wasn't toured. With four albums to pick from, we're almost spoiled.

So it'll be a long show, maybe two sets with an interval?
[Excitedly] That's a really good idea. Thanks for flagging that up.

Cherry Red are reissuing your solo catalogue with a treasure trove of bonus material. Are you a purist? Do you prefer the original albums to be presented in the way they were intended?
Of course I do. But Cherry Red are doing a fantastic job of bringing those albums to a new audience which can only be a good thing for me.

COMMUNION BREAKDOWN
- ★ BCC formed in 2009 following a meeting between Hughes and Bonamassa.
- ★ Jason Bonham's father is, of course, the late John of Led Zeppelin fame.
- ★ Derek Sherinian has played with Dream Theater, Alice Cooper, Kiss and more.

What are your plans for 2018 – a follow-up to the solo album *Resonate*?
Expect an announcement within a couple of weeks. There are more shows for me next year than I've done in decades. Next Thursday – Thanksgiving, 2017 – I will have been clean and sober for 20 years, and I just love to sing live. I am your live singer, ladies and gentlemen [chuckles].

Could it be time for the long-mooted Hughes-Thrall reunion?
Pat [Thrall] playing with me in Las Vegas [at Count's Vamp'd bar and grill in September 2016] was an incredible night. So yeah, 37 years later we are talking about making a second, all-new Hughes-Thrall record. I would imagine that will happen within the next eighteen months. **DL**

BCC appear in Wolverhampton on January 2, and at Hammersmith 24 hours later.

CHRISTIE GOODWIN/PRESS

back issues: storemags.com

Atomic Rooster

The heavy proggers revive some explosive favourites.

Almost three decades after the suicide of keyboardist Vincent Crane and seven years on from guitarist John Du Cann's fatal heart attack, Peter French, lead singer on the band's 1971 album *In Hearing Of Atomic Rooster*, talks about the latest reunion of the heavy-proggers, conducted in tandem with Steve Bolton, guitarist of the same era.

Whose idea was it to revive Atomic Rooster back in 2016?
It happened in a bizarre way. Steve Bolton heard a rumour that somebody was planning a new line-up, and he suggested we do it ourselves. The first thing we did was to ask Vincent Crane's widow for permission, which she granted. Rehearsals sounded pretty damned good. Our pianist for the first few gigs, Christian Madden, went off with Liam Gallagher, but the new guy, Adrian Gautrey, fits just fine.

Without Vincent and John, has the group's legitimacy been questioned?
Actually, it hasn't really happened. I mean, I was the one that took the band to the States and Canada, that's how the band Cactus ended up cherry-picking me to join them. I did so many gigs that I believe I have quite a reasonable stake in it all.

You do *Death Walks Behind You*, *Devil's Answer* and *Tomorrow Night*, obviously, but what else should fans expect to hear?
This [reunion] isn't about making a new album or anything, but there's quite a lot from the one I did, *In Hearing Of…*, which is among the band's more rock orientated albums, including *A Spoonful Of Bromide Helps The Pulse Rate Go Down*, *Black Snake*, *Break The Ice*, *Head In The Sky* and *Decision/Indecision*. We've also been doing *Sleeping For Years*, *Save Me* and the instrumental *VUG*. I love that we're bringing new life to songs that otherwise might not be heard.

Do you feel the presences of Vincent and John when you play live?
I can see them in the back of my mind, but up there I concentrate on doing my thing.

Is your other band Leaf Hound now on the back burner?
No, I'm gigging with both and my solo album, *Ducks In Flight* [originally issued in 1978], which features Micky Moody and Kenny Jones, has just been re-released, so this is a good time for me. **DL**

The band play London on January 20.

DEAD BOYS: JEFF FASANO/PRESS

Dead Boys

Still loud, fairly snotty, maybe not so young. NY's punk heroes return.

Having retained characteristic ferocity on their recent 40th anniversary re-recording of 1977's landmark *Young, Loud And Snotty* album, the enduringly influential CBGB street punks are fully primed to unleash their latest line-up on the UK, says guitarist Cheetah Chrome.

Despite sticking close to the original *Still Snotty: Young, Loud And Snotty At 40* stands up against today's street-punk.
I guess they're just really cool songs. We just plugged in and played 'em and that shows on the record. We didn't try to throw in any big production surprises, we just played until we were done.

You've previously indicated the recordings Sire released as *Young, Loud And Snotty* were only intended as demos, were you never completely happy with the classic version?
We got used to it, but it wasn't what we heard in our heads before we went into the studio. We were just naïve punk kids. When Genya [Ravan, producer] got us in there we'd never seen anybody get a big sound out of a little amp. We thought you had to have a Marshall stack to make that sound.

Other than the album what else can we expect of the set-list?
We're doing *Ain't It Fun* and *Son Of Sam*, usually in encores, but that'll change. We try to mix 'em up.

Stiv Bators is a hard act to follow. Where did you find vocalist Jake Hout?
Jake's in a Dead Boys tribute band that play on Halloween and dress up like zombies. My girlfriend showed me their video online and it turned out our guitarist, Chinchy, had known Jake for years. As soon as we played together we realised he was the guy.

> **"As soon as we played with Jake we realised he was the guy."**

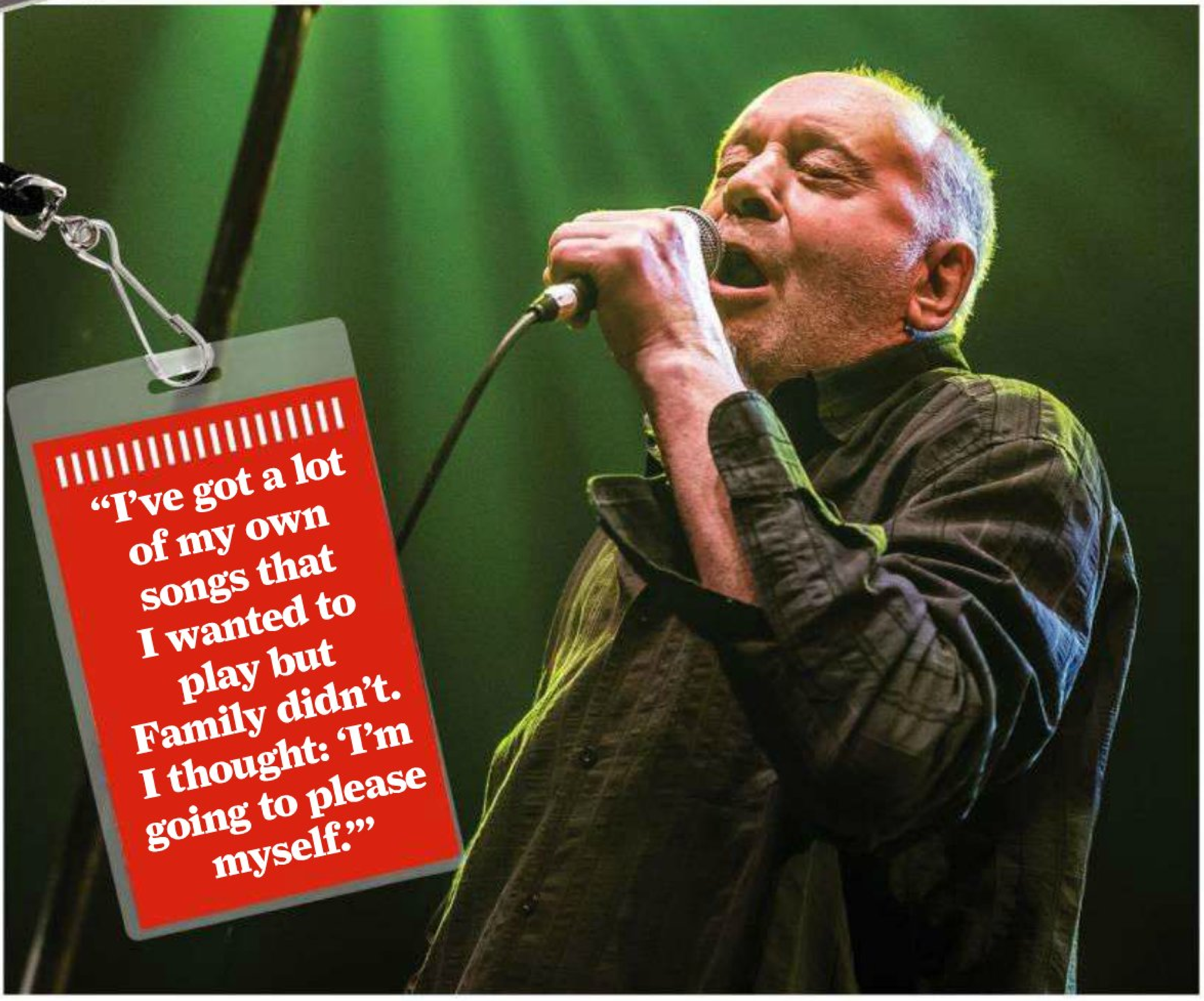
How did it feel to see yourself portrayed on screen by Rupert Grint in the CBGB movie?
Weird. He did a really great job. I was really surprised when they got him to do it. My son was a huge *Harry Potter* fan so I knew exactly who he was.

Can we expect an album of fresh material from this line-up?
Me and Jake are already talking about it and I don't see why not.

When America went punk in the 90s, a whole new generation of rock bands cited the Dead Boys as an influence. It seems you were twenty years too early?
Yeah, and now here we are again, twenty years too late.

The Dead Boys were originally sold as the American Sex Pistols, suggesting your sound was shaped by UK punk. Was it frustrating that your pioneering work in Rocket From The Tombs was totally overlooked?
Back then Rocket From The Tombs were my band that flopped that I didn't want anybody to know about, but it was pretty cool when people finally found out we weren't just trying to imitate Johnny Rotten and Steve Jones. **IF**

Dates begin in Leeds on January 31.



Roger Chapman

The former Family man hails a 50-year career with some Friends.

With the band Family now behind him, Chapman forges onwards, backed by long-time associates Geoff Whitehorn on guitar, Paul Hirsh (keyboards), Poli Palmer (vibes), Nick Payn (saxophone), Gary Twigg (bass) and John Lingwood (drums). What else to call it but Family & Friends?

How did you enjoy the farewell shows from Family?
I was glad to get them out of the way, actually [chuckles]. Family was a great band and the people involved a great bunch of musos, but there were never enough gigs to really settle in properly. I wanted to be more comfortable than that.

Having opposed the idea for so long, are you now glad that those reunions took place?
I am, because they got the band out of everybody's systems. I suppose we had a good go at it.

Family played Ramblin' Man Fair in 2016. Memorably, you swore quite a lot at the noise made by Whitesnake on the main stage.
[In irritated tones]: Well, I don't blame fucking Whitesnake – it's the fault of the fucking promoters. How thoughtless can they be? It was like trying to play a gig with the fucking radio turned on.

These shows are being billed as Family & Friends: A Career Celebration 1968-2018. Few can claim a 50-year heritage.
Thankfully I've been pretty good at what I do and worked with some great people. Playing with Family made me realise that I've got a lot of my own songs that I wanted to play and the other guys in Family didn't. I thought: 'I can do better than this; I'm going to please myself'.

That's quite a backing band you've got there.
Well, it's my band The Shortlist plus Poli [Palmer], basically.

Will the set-list cover your entire career?
As much of it as I can fit into 90 minutes, but it means that I can do the songs I want to do. I've had enough of trying to be over-loyal to other people.

Will you be playing any Streetwalkers material?
I'm not going to tell you that. [Guffaws] That means yes. It won't be a lot but there will be a sprinkling of those songs.

What other plans do you have for 2018 – any recordings?
Poli and I have been writing quite a bit over the past year, but I can't say much about when or how those songs might be released.

Could there be more Family & Friends gigs?
My agent certainly hopes so. It's looser for me, and I need that. I don't like being wrapped up in arrangements.

Does it annoy you when reviewers liken your voice to Larry The Lamb?
[Guffaws again]: I definitely don't sound like Larry The Lamb anymore. I do know that I've always had a strange voice, though. Comments were made circa *Music In A Doll's House* [Family's debut from 1968]. I thought I just sang rock 'n' roll. Not everyone likes it or I'd be king of the world, but enough of them do. **DL**

Tour dates start at Southampton Brook, January 9.

King King

The rising bluesers predict a right royal knees-up.

On the back of a hugely successful support slot with Thunder in February 2016, guitarist/frontman Alan Nimmo sets the scene for the band's biggest headline tour to date.

You were forced to delay some recent dates due to throat surgery. How's the recuperation coming along?
We're touring right now and I'm glad to say that not only has the voice healed it's become stronger. I've been working with a coach and getting the right amount of rest and it's going from strength to strength.

Those arena dates with Thunder were a major shot in the arm, weren't they?
It was the perfect band for us. I was sure their audience would understand us because we're influenced by the same music as Thunder, and that's the way it turned out.

The band's fourth album, *Exile & Grace*, accelerates what has till now been a gradual growth from a blues band into a full-blown rock outfit.
That's true. The more practise I get at writing and the more relaxed I become, those are the influences that come out.

Have you experienced negativity from bluesers that can't let King King go?
I've been waiting on that but hand-on-heart I can tell you that it hasn't happened. I'm more than grateful for that.

The album's lyrics are surprisingly dark, dealing with environmental changes (*Heed The Warning*) and decay of society (*Broken*).
Maybe it's my age; you consider the world that your children will inhabit. Sometimes I just think that we must all join hands and save the planet.

King King have just been confirmed as guests of Europe on 2018's UK tour. Are you a fan of Joey Tempest and company?
Yeah, ever since they appeared on *The Tube* in the 1980s and it'll be great to tour with such a fantastic band.

Will there be nerves in headlining bigger venues such as Shepherd's Bush Hall?
There's no ego involved, but no. We felt at home onstage at Wembley Arena [with Thunder]. This is what we want to do, where we are. I relish the chance to do that. **DL**

The tour begins in London on January 17.

ROGER CHAPMAN: KEVIN NIXON; KING KING: ROB BLACKHAM

Tour Dates

36 CRAZYFISTS

Glasgow	Cathouse	Jan 18
Manchester	Academy 3	Jan 19
Birmingham	Academy 2	Jan 20
London	Islington Academy	Jan 21

ACCEPT, NIGHT DEMON

London	Camden Koko	Feb 8

BRYAN ADAMS

Manchester	Arena	May 24
Birmingham	Genting Arena	May 25
Glasgow	The Hydro	May 26
Leeds	First Direct Arena	May 27
Newcastle	Metro Radio Arena	May 29
London	Wembley Arena	May 30
London	O2 Arena	May 31

Recommended

THE ALARM

Glasgow	ABC	May 4
Holmfirth	Picturedrome	May 5
London	Kentish Town Forum	May 26

ALIEN ANT FARM

Bristol	Academy	Feb 6
London	Kentish Town Forum	Feb 7
Manchester	The Ritz	Feb 8
Norwich	Waterfront	Feb 10
Leeds	Academy	Feb 11
Birmingham	Institute	Feb 12
Dublin	Academy	Feb 14
Belfast	Limelight 2	Feb 15
Glasgow	Garage	Feb 16
Newcastle	Academy	Feb 17
Nottingham	Rock City	Feb 18

IAN ANDERSON & JETHRO TULL

Manchester	Apollo	Apr 3
Newcastle	City Hall	Apr 5
Edinburgh	Usher Hall	Apr 6
Liverpool	Auditorium	Apr 7
Bristol	Colston Hall	Apr 9
Birmingham	Symphony Hall	Apr 10
Cambridge	Corn Exchange	Apr 11
London	Royal Albert Hall	Apr 17

ANVIL

London	Camden Underworld	Feb 6
Stoke-on-Trent	Eleven	Feb 7
Newcastle	Trillians	Feb 8
Grimsby	Yardbirds Club	Feb 9
Glasgow	Cathouse	Feb 10
Wigan	Pure	Feb 11
Belfast	Limelight	Feb 13
Dublin	Academy	Feb 14
Buckley	Tivoli	Feb 16
Bridgend	Hobos	Feb 17
Brighton	Green Door Store	Feb 18
Bilston	Robin 2	Feb 20
York	Fibbers	Feb 21
Evesham	Iron Road	Feb 22
Weston	The Bear	Feb 23

ARCH ENEMY, WINTERSUN, TRIBULATION

Glasgow	ABC	Feb 9
Nottingham	Rock City	Feb 10
London	Camden Koko	Feb 11
Manchester	The Ritz	Feb 13
Bristol	Academy	Feb 14

ATOMIC ROOSTER

London	Chelsea Under The Bridge	Jan 20

AT THE DRIVE IN, DEATH FROM ABOVE, LE BUTCHERETTES

London	Brixton Academy	Mar 9
Newcastle	Academy	Mar 10
Birmingham	Academy 2	Mar 12
Manchester	Apollo	Mar 13
Glasgow	Academy	Mar 15

AUSTIN GOLD

Northampton	King Billy	Jan 14
Leeds	Duck & Drake	Feb 16
Leeds	The Grove Inn	Feb 17
Harrogate	Blues Bar	Feb 18

BLAZE BAYLEY

Glasgow	Ivory Blacks	Feb 28
Newcastle	Trillians	Mar 1
Grimsby	Yardbirds Club	Mar 2
London	Camden Underworld	Mar 3
Bilston	Robin 2	Mar 4
Carlisle	Embers	May 8
Manchester	Club Academy	Mar 9
Pwllheli	Hammerfest	Mar 16

THE BELLRAYS

Ramsgate	Music Hall	Mar 1
Halifax	The Lantern	Mar 2
Middlesbrough	Westgarth Social Club	Mar 3
Edinburgh	Opium	Mar 4
Glasgow	Broadcast	Mar 6
Newcastle	The Cluny	Mar 7
Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	Mar 8
Manchester	Soup Kitchen	Mar 9
Newport	Le Pub	Mar 10
Southampton	Talking Heads	Mar 13
Bristol	Lantern	Mar 14
Brighton	The Albert	Mar 15
Norwich	NAC	Mar 16
London	Camden Assembly	Mar 17

BLACK COUNTRY COMMUNION

Wolverhampton	Civic Hall	Jan 2
London	Hammersmith Apollo	Jan 4

BLACK LABEL SOCIETY

London	Royal Albert Hall	Apr 5
Dublin	Tivoli	Apr 7
Belfast	Limelight	Apr 8

BLACK MOTH

Brighton	Hope & Ruin	Feb 7
London	Tufnell Park Boston Music Rooms	Feb 8
Manchester	Rebellion	Feb 9
Glasgow	Garage Attic	Feb 11
Newcastle	The Cluny 2	Feb 12
Birmingham	Mama Roux's	Feb 13
Cardiff	Fuel	Feb 14
Norwich	Waterfront Studios	Feb 15
Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	Feb 16

JOE BONAMASSA

Cardiff	Motorpoint Arena	Mar 9
Manchester	Arena	Mar 10
Carlisle	Sands Centre	Mar 11
Aberdeen	GE Oil & Gas Centre	Mar 13
Gateshead	The Sage	Mar 14
Birmingham	Genting Arena	Mar 16
Brighton	Centre	Mar 17
London	Hampton Court Palace	Jun 12

THE BREW

Brighton	Komedia	Jan 25
Minehead	Giants Of Rock Festival	Jan 26
Leicester	The Soundhouse	Jan 27
Oxford	Haven Club	Feb 1
Wakefield	Warehouse 23	Feb 2
Glasgow	Nice 'N' Sleazy	Feb 9
Edinburgh	Bannermans	Feb 10
Nottingham	Bodega	Feb 16
Wolverhampton	Slade Rooms	Feb 17

BRITROCK MUST BE DESTROYED! REEF, THE WILDHEARTS, TERRORVISION

Manchester	Academy	May 4
Birmingham	Digbeth Arena	May 5
London	Hammersmith Apollo	May 6
Glasgow	Academy	May 19
Newcastle	Academy	May 20

BROTHERS OSBORNE

Bristol	Academy	May 7
Brighton	Concorde 2	May 8
Birmingham	Academy 2	May 9
London	Camden Koko	May 11
Manchester	The Ritz	May 12
Glasgow	Garage	May 13

NICK CAVE & THE BAD SEEDS, PATTI SMITH, MORE

London	Victoria Park All Points East Festival	Jun 3

ROGER CHAPMAN, FAMILY & FRIENDS

Southampton	The Brook	Jan 9
Leicester	Academy	Jan 11
London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Jan 13
Newcastle	Academy	Jan 17

CLIMAX BLUES BAND

London	Oxford Street 100 Club	Jan 17

JOHN COGHLAN'S QUO

Reading	Sub 89	Feb 9
Cardiff	The Globe	Apr 7
London	Putney Half Moon	Apr 20
Morecambe	The Platform	May 25
Wavendon	The Stables	Jun 9
Stoke-on-Trent	Eleven	Jun 23
Marlborough	Manton Fest	Jun 30
Hook Norton	Music At The Crossroads	Jul 7

Classic Rock Recommends

DOWNLOAD FESTIVAL

Ozzy Osbourne (pictured), Guns N' Roses and Avenged Sevenfold headline this year's fun-in-the-sun/rain/mud fest.

Leicestershire	Donington Park	Jun 8-10

CURVED AIR

Minehead	Butlins Giants Of Rock	Jan 26
London	Manette St Borderline	Feb 16
Farncombe	St John's Church	Feb 17
Bilston	Robin 2	Feb 18
Havant	The Spring	Feb 23
Deal	Astor Theatre	Feb 24
Sheffield	The Greystones	Feb 25
Scarborough	Market Hall	Mar 1
Kinross	Green Hotel	Mar 2
Gateshead	The Sage	Mar 3
New Brighton	Floral Pavilion	Mar 4

THE DEAD BOYS

Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	Jan 31
Sheffield	Academy 2	Feb 1
Birmingham	Institute 2	Feb 2
Newcastle	Riverside	Feb 3
Glasgow	ABC 2	Feb 4
Manchester	Gorilla	Feb 6
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Feb 7
London	Islington Academy	Feb 8

DIRTY THRILLS, BLUE NATION

London	Camden Underworld	Feb 28

EPICA

Nottingham	Rock City	Apr 6
Glasgow	ABC	Apr 7
Bristol	Academy	Apr 8
Dublin	Tivoli	Apr 10
Manchester	The Ritz	Apr 12
London	Kentish Town Forum	Apr 13

EUROPE, KING KING

Manchester	Academy	Sep 14
Glasgow	Barrowland	Sep 15
Newcastle	Academy	Sep 17
Nottingham	Rock City	Sep 18
Birmingham	Institute	Sep 19
Cardiff	St David's Hall	Sep 21
Portsmouth	Pyramids Centre	Sep 22
London	Royal Albert Hall	Sep 23
Brighton	Dome	Sep 24

EVANESCENCE

London	Royal Festival Hall	Mar 30, 31
Manchester	Apollo	Apr 2
Nottingham	Arena	Apr 3
Glasgow	Armadillo	Apr 5
Sheffield	City Hall	Apr 6

BRIAN FALLON & THE HOWLING WEATHER

Birmingham	Institute	Feb 20
Manchester	The Ritz	Feb 21
Glasgow	ABC	Feb 22
London	Camden Koko	Feb 23
Nottingham	Rock City	Feb 24
Bristol	SWX	Feb 25
Newcastle	Boiler Shop	Mar 8
Leeds	Beckett	Mar 9
Dublin	Olympia Theatre	Mar 10
Belfast	Limelight	Mar 11

FALL OUT BOY

London	Brixton Electric	Jan 11
Birmingham	Arena	Mar 27
Cardiff	Motorpoint Arena	Mar 28
Manchester	Arena	Mar 29
London	O2 Arena	Mar 31

FEEDER

Bristol	Academy	Mar 7
Norwich	UEA	Mar 8
Manchester	Academy	Mar 10
Glasgow	Barrowland	Mar 11
Leeds	Academy	Mar 13
Birmingham	Academy	Mar 14
Nottingham	Rock City	Mar 16
London	Brixton Academy	Mar 17

FIREWIND, RAGE

London	Camden Underworld	Jan 21
Sheffield	Corporation	Jan 22

FOO FIGHTERS

Manchester	Etihad Stadium	Jun 19
London	Stadium	Jun 22, 23

FOREIGNER, JOANNE SHAW TAYLOR, JOHN PARR

Manchester	Apollo	May 12
Glasgow	Clyde Auditorium	May 13
Birmingham	Symphony Hall	May 15
London	Royal Albert Hall	May 16

FREEDOM CALL

Glasgow	Cathouse	Feb 22
Sheffield	Corporation	Feb 23
Cannock	The Station	Feb 24
London	Camden Underworld	Feb 25

THE FUZZTONES

London	Oxford Street 100 Club	Jan 25

G3: JOE SATRIANI, JOHN PETRUCCI, ULI JON ROTH

Southend-on-Sea	Cliffs Pavilion	Apr 24
London	Hammersmith Apollo	Apr 25
Bristol	Colston Hall	Apr 26
Manchester	Apollo	Apr 27
Portsmouth	Guildhall	Apr 29
Birmingham	Symphony Hall	Apr 30

ERIC GALES, QUINN SULLIVAN, GARY HOEY

London	Highbury Garage	Mar 17

GARBAGE

London	Brixton Academy	Sep 14

GIANTS OF ROCK FESTIVAL HAWKWIND, URIAH HEEP, MAGNUM, MORE

Minehead	Butlins	Jan 26-29

GIZMODROME

London	King's Cross Scala	Mar 7

THE GODFATHERS

Southampton	Talking Heads	Feb 2
Edinburgh	Voodoo Rooms	Feb 8
Glasgow	Audio	Feb 9
Dundee	Beat Generator	Feb 10
Manchester	Ruby Lounge	Feb 16
London	Oxford Street 100 Club	Feb 17
Bristol	Fleece & Firkin	Feb 18

OZZY OSBOURNE: KEVIN NIXON

LIVE!

Birmingham	Hare & Hounds	Feb 23
York	Victoria Vaults	Feb 24
Middlesbrough	Westgarth Social Club	Feb 25

GREAT BRITISH ROCK & BLUES FESTIVAL
ROGER CHAPMAN, NAZARETH, LUCKY PETERSON, MORE

Skegness	Butlins	Jan 19-21

GROUNDHOGS

London	Oxford Street 100 Club	Apr 24

RYAN HAMILTON & THE TRAITORS

Huddersfield	Parish	Mar 15
Liverpool	Shipping Forecast	Mar 16
Newcastle	Think Tank	Mar 17
Glasgow	Stereo	Mar 18
Nottingham	Bodega	Mar 20
Cardiff	Fuel	Mar 21
Southampton	Joiners Arms	Mar 22
London	King's Cross Surya	Mar 23

PETER HAMMILL

Glasgow	Oran Mor	Apr 24
Manchester	Stoller Hall	Apr 25
Brighton	St Luke's Church	Apr 28
Bristol	The Lantern	Apr 29
Cambridge	Junction	Apr 30

JO HARMAN, ELLES BAILEY

London	Oxford Street 100 Club	Jan 17

BETH HART

Dublin	Vicar Street	Apr 10
Ipswich	Regent Theatre	Apr 12
Bexhill	De La Warr Pavilion	Apr 14
Nottingham	Royal Concert Hall	Apr 15
Oxford	New Theatre	Apr 18
Folkestone	Leas Hall	Apr 19
Cardiff	St David Hall	Apr 21
Cambridge	Corn Exchange	Apr 24
Blackpool	Opera House	Apr 26
Hull	City Hall	Apr 27
Reading	Hexagon	Apr 30
Portsmouth	Guildhall	May 1
Coventry	Cathedral	Nov 3
London	Royal Albert Hall	May 4
Cheltenham	Jazz Festival	May 5

ROBYN HITCHCOCK

Manchester	Academy	May 11
London	Malet Street ULU	May 12
Witney	Fat Li's	May 15
Bristol	Louisiana	May 16
Cambridge	Unitarian Church	May 18
St Leonards	Kino-Teatr	May 19
Hull	Fruit	May 22
Liverpool	Philharmonic Music Room	May 23
Glasgow	Oran Mor	May 24
Sheffield	Hubs	May 25
Morecambe	More Music	May 26
Newton Abbot	Kingkerswell Church	May 29
Ramsgate	Music Hall	May 31
Dublin	Workman's Club	Jun 1

Recommended

IRON MAIDEN, KILLSWITCH ENGAGE

Newcastle	Metro Radio Arena	Jul 31
Belfast	SSE Arena	Aug 2
Aberdeen	Exhibition & Conference Centre	Aug 4
Manchester	Arena	Aug 6
Birmingham	Genting Arena	Aug 7
London	O2 Arena	Aug 10, 11

TO BE RETAINED ISSUED SUBJECT TO THE CONDITIONS ON BACK

JADIS

Southampton	Talking Heads	May 3
St Helens	Citadel	May 4
London	Tufnell Park Dome	May 5

JANE LEE HOOKER

Chislehurst	Beaverwood Club	Apr 19
Sutton	Boom Boom Club	Apr 20

KING CRIMSON

Bournemouth	Pavilion Theatre	Oct 29
Cardiff	St David's Hall	Oct 31
London	Palladium	Nov 2
Birmingham	Symphony Hall	Nov 6
Manchester	Bridgewater Hall	Nov 9
Glasgow	Royal Concert Hall	Nov 12

KING KING

London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Jan 17
Birmingham	Town Hall	Jan 18
Bath	Forum	Jan 20
Edinburgh	Queen's Hall	Jan 26
Sheffield	Leadmill	Jan 27

KNIFEWORLD

London	Islington The Lexington	Jan 20

KING CRIMSON

Classic Rock Recommends

Think you won't care much for modern prog? Get down to a Crimson gig and see if you don't end up buying a T-shirt.

See below for dates, currently October 29 – November 12

LACUNA COIL

London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Jan 19

SONNY LANDRETH

London	Great Portland Street 229 Club	Apr 15

LEVELLERS, GINGER WILDHEART

Wrexham	William Aston Hall	Feb 2
Preston	Charter Theatre	Feb 3
London	Chalk Farm Roundhouse	Feb 4
Buxton	Opera House	Mar 13
Cheltenham	Town Hall	Mar 14
Yeovil	Westlands	Mar 15
York	Barbican	Mar 16
Wavendon	The Stables	Mar 17
Liverpool	Philharmonic	Mar 18
Basingstoke	The Anvil	Mar 20
Cambridge	Corn Exchange	Mar 21
Leicester	De Montfort Hall	Mar 22
Bexhill	De La Warr Pavilion	Mar 23
Winchester	Cathedral	Mar 24

LIFESIGNS

Bilston	Robin 2	Jan 21
Manchester	Rebellion	Jan 25
Milton Keynes	Craufurd Arms	Jan 27
London	Putney Half Moon	Jan 28
Chepstow	Winter's End Festival	Apr 29
London	Resonate Festival	Sep 8

AYNSLEY LISTER

Bilston	Robin 2	Jan 18
Wavendon	The Stables	Jan 23
Cheltenham	Bacon Theatre	Jan 24
Sedgefield	Rock & Blues Club	Jan 26
London	Oxford Street 100 Club	Jan 30

LITTLE CAESAR

London	Camden Underworld	Feb 21
Milton Keynes	Craufurd Arms	Feb 22
Sheffield	Corporation	Feb 24
Newcastle	The Cluny	Feb 23
Bilston	Robin 2	Feb 27
Keighley	Penningtons	Mar 1
Evesham	Iron Road	Mar 2
Grimsby	Yardbirds Club	Mar 3
Glasgow	Cathouse	Mar 4
Edinburgh	Bannermans	Mar 7
Manchester	Academy 3	Mar 8
Chester	Live Rooms	Mar 9
Pwllheli	Hard Rock Hell AOR	Mar 10

CONNIE LUSH, KYLA BROX, ERJA LYYTINEN

Whitby	Pavilion Theatre	Mar 21
Coventry	Albany Theatre	Mar 22
London	Chelsea Under The Bridge	Mar 23
Lincoln	Alive!	Mar 24
Durham	Gala Theatre	Mar 25
Bury St Edmunds	The Apex	Mar 27
Bristol	Tunnels	Mar 28
Keighley	The Octagon	Mar 29
Southport	The Atkinson	Mar 30

JEFF LYNNE'S ELO

Nottingham	Motorpoint Arena	Sep 30
Glasgow	Hydro Arena	Oct 3
Manchester	Arena	Oct 5
Newcastle	Metro Radio Arena	Oct 9
Birmingham	Arena	Oct 10
Leeds	First Direct Arena	Oct 15
London	O2 Arena	Oct 17
Liverpool	Echo Arena	Oct 23

MACHINE HEAD

Southampton	Guildhall	May 13
Cardiff	University	May 14
Bristol	Academy	May 15
Birmingham	Academy	May 17
London	Chalk Farm Roundhouse	May 18, 19
Nottingham	Rock City	May 21
Newcastle	Academy	May 22
Glasgow	Academy	May 23
Manchester	Academy	May 25

MAGNUM

Bristol	Trinity	Feb 20
Cardiff	Tramshed	Feb 21
Holmfirth	Picturedrome	Feb 23
Manchester	Academy 2	Feb 24
Hull	Welly	Feb 25
Aberdeen	Garage	Feb 26
Glasgow	Garage	Feb 27
Belfast	Limelight	Mar 1
Birmingham	Town Hall	Mar 2
Preston	Guildhall	Feb 4
Nottingham	Rock City	Mar 5
Leamington Spa	The Assembly	Mar 7
Cambridge	Junction	Mar 8
London	Islington Assembly Hall	Mar 9
Southampton	Engine Rooms	Mar 11
Brighton	Old Market	Mar 12

MANIC STREET PREACHERS

Newcastle	Metro Radio Arena	Apr 23
Glasgow	Hydro Arena	Apr 25
Birmingham	Arena	Apr 27
Manchester	Arena	Apr 28
Llandudno	Venue Cymru Arena	May 1
Leeds	First Direct Arena	May 2
London	Wembley Arena	May 4
Cardiff	Motorpoint Arena	May 5

MARILLION

Gateshead	The Sage	Apr 11
Cambridge	Corn Exchange	Apr 13
Birmingham	Symphony Hall	Apr 14
Brighton	Dome	Apr 16
Bristol	Colston Hall	Apr 17
Reading	Hexagon	Apr 19
Liverpool	Philharmonic Hall	Apr 20

BERNIE MARSDEN, FLAWLESS CARBON

London	Oxford Street 100 Club	Jan 18

MICHAEL McDONALD

Dublin	Vicar Street	Mar 11
Manchester	Apollo	Mar 12
Birmingham	Symphony Hall	Mar 13
London	Hammersmith Apollo	Mar 15

NAZARETH

Barrow In Furness	The Forum Theatre	Jan 19
Wigan	Pure Club	Jan 20
Skegness	Great British Rock & Blues Festival	Jan 21
Reading	Sub 89	Jan 25
Stroud	Subscription Rooms	Jan 26
Bristol	Marble Factory	Jan 27
Minehead	Giants Of Rock Festival	Jan 28

NICKELBACK, SEETHER

Glasgow	The Hydro	May 3
Leeds	First Direct Arena	May 5
Liverpool	Echo Arena	May 7
Manchester	Arena	May 8
Birmingham	Genting Arena	May 10
London	O2 Arena	May 11
Nottingham	Motorpoint Arena	May 13

OPERATION: MINDCRIME

Dublin	Button Factory	Jan 11
Belfast	Empire Music Hall	Jan 12
Sheffield	Corporation	Jan 13
Pontypridd	Muni Arts Centre	Jan 14
London	Highbury Garage	Jan 15
Newcastle	Trillians	Jan 16
Bilston	Robin 2	Jan 17
Glasgow	G2	Jan 18
Grimsby	Yardbirds Club	Jan 19
Manchester	Rebellion	Jan 20
Buckley	Tivoli	Jan 21

ORPHANED LAND, IN VAIN, SUBTERRANEAN MASQUERADE, AEVUM

London	Camden Underworld	Feb 26

PARADISE LOST

Colchester	Arts Centre	Feb 15
Portsmouth	Wedgewood Rooms	Feb 16
Bristol	Thekla	Feb 17
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Feb 18
Belfast	Limelight 2	Feb 20
Dublin	Tivoli	Feb 21
Glasgow	Classic Grand	Feb 22
Manchester	Gorilla	Feb 23

PARAMORE

Cardiff	Motorpoint Arena	Jan 11
London	O2 Arena	Jan 12
Birmingham	Genting Arena	Jan 14
Manchester	Arena	Jan 19
Glasgow	The Hydro	Jan 20

DAN PATLANSKY

Manchester	Deaf Institute	Mar 15
Newcastle	The Cluny	Mar 16
Leek	Foxlowe Arts Centre	Mar 17
Bristol	The Tunnel	Mar 18
Sheffield	The Greystones	Mar 20
London	Manette Street Borderline	Mar 21

PEARL JAM

London	O2 Arena	Jun 18, 19

MIKE PETERS & THE ALARM

Glasgow	ABC	May 4
Holmfirth	Picturedrome	May 5
London	Kentish Town Forum	May 26

BEN POOLE, STEVIE NIMMO

London	Oxford Street 100 Club	Jan 15

PUBLIC SERVICE BROADCASTING

Oxford	New Theatre	Apr 5
Bournemouth	Academy	Apr 6
Brighton	Dome	Apr 7
Margate	Winter Gardens	Apr 8
Cambridge	Corn Exchange	Apr 10
Swansea	Brangwyn Hall	Apr 11
Liverpool	Olympia	Apr 12
Leicester	De Montford Hall	Apr 13
Edinburgh	Usher Hall	Apr 14
Middlesbrough	Empire	Apr 16
Sheffield	Academy	Apr 17

QUEENS OF THE STONE AGE, IGGY POP, THE HIVES, MORE

London	Finsbury Park	Jun 30

THE QUIREBOYS (UNPLUGGED)

Ballymena	Diamond Rock Club	Jan 13
Derby	Flowerpot	Jan 27
Bilston	Robin 2	Jan 28

RAMBLIN' MAN FAIR
HALESTORM, STEVE EARLE, BLACKBERRY SMOKE, SONS OF APOLLO, MORE

Maidstone	Mote Park	Jun 30, Jul 1

ALAN REED & THE DAUGHTERS OF EXPEDIENCY

Southampton	Talking Heads	Feb 27
Stoke-on-Trent	Eleven	Feb 28
Glasgow	Ivory Blacks	Mar 1
Chepstow	Winter's End Festival	Apr 28

DAN REED & DANNY VAUGHN

Glasgow	Cottiers Theatre	Feb 20
Edinburgh	Voodoo Rooms	Feb 21
Newcastle	The Cluny	Feb 22
Manchester	Ruby Lounge	Feb 23
Bilston	Robin 2	Feb 25
Chester	Live Rooms	Feb 27

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Sheffield	Local Authority	Feb 28
Nottingham	Bodega	Mar 1
Bedford	Esquires	Mar 2
London	Manette Street Borderline	Mar 3
Evesham	Iron Road	Mar 28
Cardiff	Fuel	Mar 30
Ahoghill, N. Ireland	The Diamond	Mar 31

RHAPSODY

London	Islington Academy	Feb 26

CHRIS ROBINSON BROTHERHOOD

London	Malet Street ULU	Mar 16

Recommended

ROCKIN' THE BLUES
ERIC GALES, QUINN SULLIVAN, GARY HOEY, LANCE LOPEZ

London	Highbury Garage	Mar 17

TO BE RETAINED ISSUED SUBJECT TO THE CONDITIONS ON BACK

SARACEN, ELIMINATOR, PURPLE HILL WITCH

London	Tufnell Park Boston Music Room	Jan 13

SAXON, MAGNUM, DIAMOND HEAD, ROCK GODDESS

Cardiff	University	Feb 23
Cambridge	Corn Exchange	Feb 24
Hull	City Hall	Feb 25

SARI SCHORR & THE ENGINE ROOM

London	Putney Half Moon	Jan 16
Skegness	Blues Weekend	Jan 19
St Helens	Citadel	Jan 20

SEPULTURA

Bristol	SWX	Mar 13
Glasgow	SWG3	Mar 14
Dublin	The Tivoli	Mar 15
Pwllheli	Hammerfest	Mar 16
Sheffield	Foundry	Mar 17
London	Camden Koko	Mar 18

SIMPLE MINDS

Glasgow	Barrowland	Feb 13
Manchester	Albert Hall	Feb 14
London	Chalk Farm Roundhouse	Feb 15

SKID ROW

Dublin	Academy	Mar 2
Belfast	Limelight	Mar 3
Glasgow	ABC	Mar 5
Inverness	Iron Works	Mar 6
Newcastle	Academy	Mar 7
Sheffield	Corporation	Mar 9
Pwllheli	Hard Rock Hell Festival	Mar 10
London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Mar 11
Hull	Welly	Mar 12
Manchester	Academy 2	Mar 14
Cardiff	University	Mar 15
Liverpool	Hanger 34	Mar 16
Coventry	Kasbah	Mar 17
Norwich	Waterfront	Mar 19
Bristol	Academy	Mar 20
Brighton	Concorde 2	Mar 21
Nottingham	Rock City	Mar 22

THE SKIDS

Glasgow	King Tut's Wah Wah Hut	Jan 10, 11
Aberdeen	Lemon Tree	Jan 12
Stockton-on-Tees	Georgian Theatre	Jan 18
Norwich	Waterfront	Jan 19
Coventry	Empire	Jan 20
Preston	Guildhall	Jan 21
Dunfermline	Glen Pavilion	Feb 9
Holmfirth	Picturedrome	Jun 1
Manchester	Academy	Jun 2
Reading	Sub 89	Jun 7
Frome	Cheese & Grain	Jun 8
Cardiff	Tramshed	Jun 9
Newcastle	Academy	Jun 16
Portsmouth	Wedgewood Rooms	Jun 27
Bilston	Robin 2	Jun 28
Brighton	Concorde 2	Jun 29
London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Jun 30

SKINDRED, CKY

Norwich	UEA	Apr 19
Southampton	Guildhall	Apr 20
Nottingham	Rock City	Apr 21
Manchester	Academy	Apr 22
Glasgow	ABC	Apr 24
Bristol	Academy	Apr 25
Leeds	Academy	Apr 27
London	Brixton Academy	Apr 28
Birmingham	Institute	Apr 29

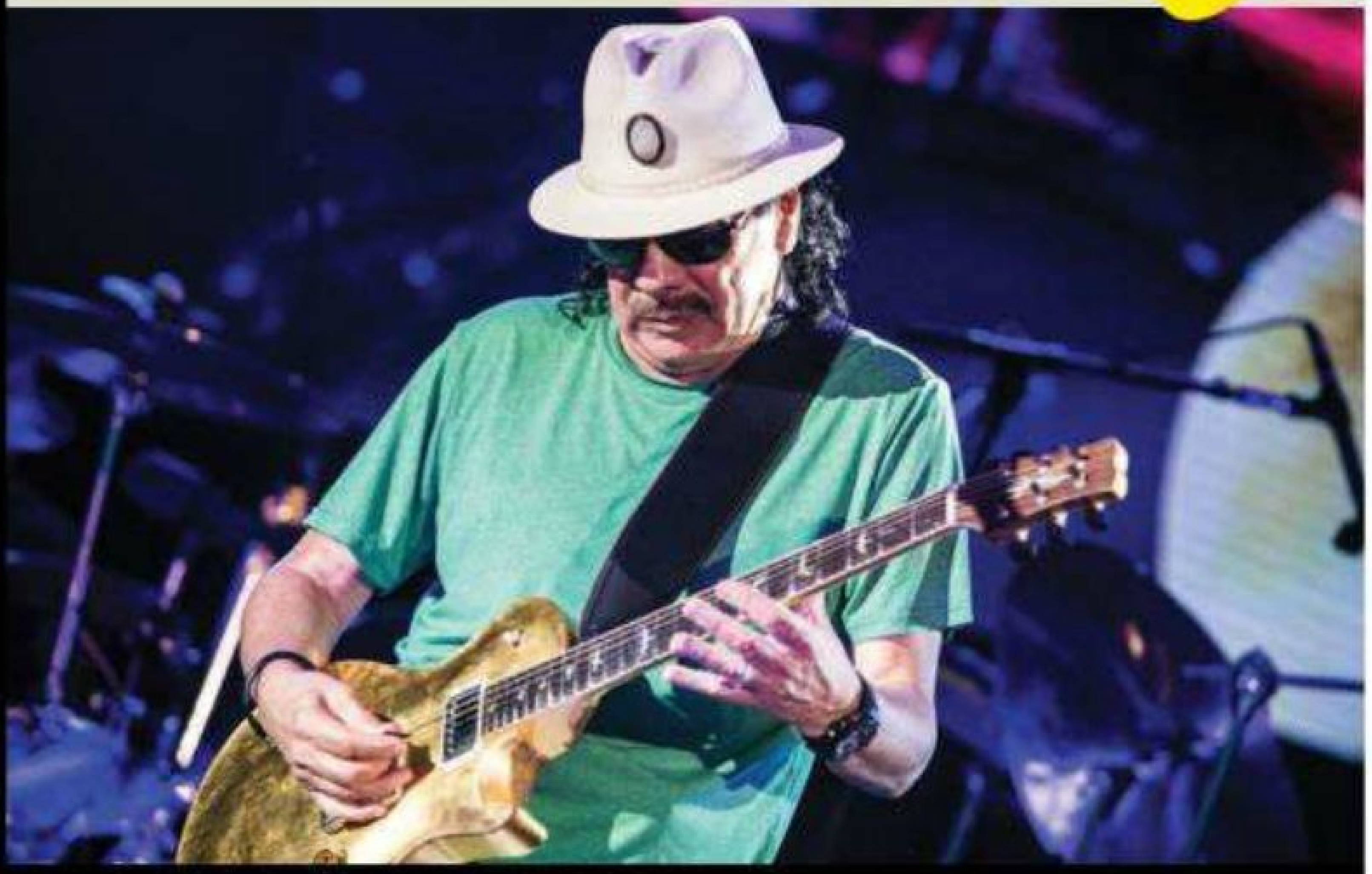
STEELHOUSE FESTIVAL
BLACK STAR RIDERS, THE QUIREBOYS, KING KING, MORE

Ebbew Vale	Hafod-Y-Dafal Farm	Jul 27-29

SANTANA: REX

CLASSIC ROCK RECOMMENDS

ERIC CLAPTON, SANTANA, STEVE WINWOOD, MORE



A blues legend, giants of Latino rock and one of the greatest vocalists ever to sing into a mic. Na, mate, Woodstock was '69.

London	Hyde Park BST Festival	Jul 8

STEEL PANTHER

Dublin	Academy	Jan 18
Belfast	Limelight	Jan 19
Glasgow	Academy	Jan 20
Manchester	Apollo	Jan 24
London	Hammersmith Apollo	Jan 26

STEREOPHONICS

Aberdeen	AECC Arena	Feb 23
Glasgow	The Hydro	Feb 24
Nottingham	Motorpoint Arena	Feb 26
Brighton	Centre	Feb 27
Birmingham	Genting Arena	Mar 1
London	Wembley Arena	Mar 2
Bournemouth	BIC	Mar 5
Cardiff	Motorpoint Arena	Mar 6, 7
Manchester	Arena	Mar 9
Leeds	First Direct Arena	Mar 10
Newcastle	Metro Radio Arena	Mar 12

STONE BROKEN, JARED JAMES NICHOLS, THE BAD FLOWERS

Brighton	The Haunt	Feb 22
London	Islington Assembly Hall	Feb 24
Manchester	Club Academy	Feb 25
Glasgow	G2	Feb 26
Newcastle	Riverside	Feb 28
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Mar 1
Pontypridd	Muni Arts Centre	Mar 2
Birmingham	Institute 2	Mar 3
Sheffield	Corporation	Mar 4
Chester	Live Rooms	Mar 6
Bristol	Fleece & Firkin	Mar 7

STONE FREE FESTIVAL
SCORPIONS, YES: ANDERSON RABIN & WAKEMAN, MEGADETH, ROGER HODGSON, MORE

London	O2 Arena	Jun 16, 17

THE STRANGLERS, THERAPY?

Liverpool	Academy	Mar 6
Glasgow	Academy	Mar 8
Inverness	Ironworks	Mar 9
Kilmarnock	Grand Hall	Mar 10
Nottingham	Rock City	Mar 12
Portsmouth	Guildhall	Mar 13
Bristol	Academy	Mar 15
Cardiff	Tramshed	Mar 16
Birmingham	Academy	Mar 17
Norwich	Nick Rayns LCR	Mar 19
Southend-on-Sea	Cliffs Pavilion	Mar 20
Leeds	Academy	Mar 22
Lincoln	Engine Shed	Mar 23
London	Brixton Academy	Mar 24
Guildford	G Live	Mar 26
Reading	Hexagon	Mar 27
Newcastle	Academy	Mar 29
Cambridge	Corn Exchange	Mar 30
Manchester	Apollo	Mar 31

THE TEMPERANCE MOVEMENT

Leeds	Academy	Feb 18
Cambridge	Junction	Feb 20
Birmingham	Institute	Feb 21
Bristol	Academy	Feb 22
Poole	Winter's End Festival	Feb 24
Manchester	The Ritz	Feb 25
Dublin	Grand Social	Feb 27
Belfast	Empire Music Hall	Feb 28
Aberdeen	Garage	Mar 2
Glasgow	Barrowland	Mar 3
Newcastle	Northumbria University	Mar 4
Sheffield	Academy	Mar 5
Portsmouth	Pyramid Centre	Mar 7
Nottingham	Rock City	Mar 8
London	Kentish Town Forum	Mar 9

TESTAMENT, ANNIHILATOR VADER

Bristol	Motion	Mar 29
Manchester	The Ritz	Mar 30
Birmingham	Institute	Mar 31
Dublin	Vicar Street	Apr 1
Glasgow	QMU	Apr 2
London	Camden Koko	Apr 4

THERION

London	Islington Assembly Hall	Feb 3
Manchester	Rebellion	Feb 4
Aberdeen	The Assembly	Feb 7
Glasgow	Audio	Feb 8
Sheffield	Corporation	Feb 9
Belfast	Limelight	Feb 10
Dublin	Tivoli	Feb 11
Bristol	Bierkeller	Feb 13
Birmingham	Institute	Feb 14

THIRTY SECONDS TO MARS

Cardiff	Motorpoint Arena	Mar 23
Manchester	Arena	Mar 24
Glasgow	The Hydro	Mar 25
London	O2 Arena	Mar 27
Birmingham	Arena	Mar 29

TOTO

London	Royal Albert Hall	Apr 1
Manchester	Bridgewater Hall	Apr 2
Dublin	Vicar Street	Apr 4
Belfast	Waterfront Auditorium	Apr 7
Glasgow	SEC Armadillo	Apr 8

TRINITY LIVE
STEVE ROTHERY, TOUCHSTONE, GHOST COMMUNITY, MORE

London	Islington Assembly Hall	May 12

TRIVIUM, CODE ORANGE, POWER TRIP, VENOM PRISON

Bristol	Academy	Apr 16
Birmingham	Academy	Apr 17
Glasgow	Academy	Apr 17
Manchester	Academy	Apr 20
London	Brixton Academy	Apr 21

TURBONEGRO

London	Camden Koko	Mar 2

TURBOWOLF

Manchester	Academy 3	Mar 9
Glasgow	Stereo	Mar 10
Newcastle	Academy 2	Mar 11
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Mar 13
London	King's Cross Scala	Mar 14
Bristol	Bierkeller	Mar 15

MARTIN TURNER EX-WISHBONE ASH

Sudbury	Quay Theatre	Mar 16
Twickenham	Eel Pie Club	Mar 22
Kidlington	Football Club	Mar 23
Nuneaton	Queens Hall	Mar 24
York	Fibbers	Mar 30
Derby	Flowerpot	Mar 31
Bromsgrove	Artrix	Apr 6
Swindon	Victoria	Apr 7
Bishops Cleeve	Tithe Barn	Apr 8
Glasgow	The Ferry	Apr 12
Kinross	Green Hotel	Apr 13
Hartlepool	Belle Vue Club	Apr 14
Sheffield	The Greystones	Apr 15
Barnet	Bull Theatre	Apr 21

JOE LOUIS WALKER

London	Oxford Street 100 Club	Jan 16

ROGER WATERS

Glasgow	The Hydro	Jun 29
Liverpool	Echo Arena	Jul 2
Manchester	Arena	Jul 3
London	Hyde Park British Summer Time	Jul 6
Birmingham	Arena	Jul 7

PAUL WELLER

Brighton	Centre	Feb 17
Bournemouth	BIC	Feb 18
Plymouth	Pavilions	Feb 20
Cardiff	Motorpoint Arena	Feb 21
Leeds	First Direct Arena	Feb 23
Newcastle	Metro Radio Arena	Feb 24
Glasgow	The Hydro	Feb 25
Nottingham	Motorpoint Arena	Feb 27
Manchester	Arena	Mar 1
Birmingham	Genting Arena	Feb 2
London	O2 Arena	Feb 3

THE WHITE BUFFALO

Manchester	The Ritz	Apr 15
Glasgow	ABC	Apr 16
Birmingham	Institute	Apr 17
Oxford	Academy	Apr 19
Bristol	Academy	Apr 20
London	Kentish Town Forum	Apr 21

DAMIAN WILSON & ADAM WAKEMAN

Washington	Arts Centre	Feb 1
Kinross	Green Hotel	Feb 2
Kirton In Lindsey	Town Hall	Feb 3
Wavendon	The Stables	Feb 4
Falmouth	The Poly	Feb 9
Penzance	The Acorn	Feb 10
Tavistock	The Wharf	Feb 11
London	St Pancras Old Church	Feb 15
Sandwich	St Mary's Arts Centre	Feb 16
Cardiff	Acapela	Feb 18
Solihull	Core Theatre	Feb 22
Lowdham	St Mary's Church	Feb 23
Fletching	Trading Boundaries	Feb 24
Norwich	Arts Centre	Feb 25
Worcester	Huntingdon Hall	Mar 1
Bath	Chapel Arts Centre	Mar 2
York	The Basement	Mar 4
Dumfries	Theatre Royal	Mar 5

STEVEN WILSON

Coventry	Warwick Arts Centre	Mar 15
Belfast	Mandela Hall	Mar 17
Dublin	Olympia Theatre	Mar 19
Cardiff	St David's Hall	Mar 21
Birmingham	Symphony Hall	Mar 22
Glasgow	Clyde Auditorium	Mar 24
Gateshead	The Sage	Mar 25
London	Royal Albert Hall	Mar 27-29
Manchester	Bridgewater Hall	Mar 31, Apr 1

WINTER'S END FESTIVAL
ARENA, LIFESIGNS, MORE

Chepstow	Drill Hall	Apr 26-28

WITHIN TEMPTATION

Birmingham	Academy	Nov 9
Manchester	Apollo	Nov 10
Glasgow	Academy	Nov 11
London	Brixton Academy	Nov 13

ANDREW WK

Cardiff	Great Hall	Apr 13
London	Kentish Town Forum	Apr 14
Birmingham	Academy 2	Apr 15
Norwich	Waterfront	Apr 18
Portsmouth	Wedgewood Rooms	Apr 19
Manchester	The Ritz	Apr 20
Glasgow	Garage	Apr 21

YES

Bristol	Colston Hall	Mar 13
Sheffield	City Hall	Mar 14
Glasgow	SEC Armadillo	Mar 16
Manchester	Bridgewater Hall	Mar 17
Gateshead	The Sage	Mar 18
Birmingham	Symphony Hall	Mar 20
Brighton	Centre	Mar 21
Liverpool	Philharmonic Hall	Mar 23
London	Palladium	Mar 24, 25

Alice Cooper/ The Mission/ The Tubes

Wembley Arena

It's more than 40 years since this Alice Cooper band played this venue, but it was worth the wait.

Alice Cooper's visits to Britain have become what one might call frequent of late. A stalwart of the live circuit, Alice turns up, kills a nurse, gets executed and rises from his grave, with similarly regular reliability to department-store Santas and tax returns. But the original Alice Cooper group? Different story.

Some of us have been waiting a very long time for this particular reunion to finally grace the stage of Wembley Arena. The last time Alice Cooper the band (guitarist Michael Bruce, bassist Dennis Dunaway, drummer Neal Smith, lead guitarist, now the late, Glen Buxton) appeared here, this venue was known as the Empire Pool. And they did well to fill it, because the date was June 30, 1972, the final show of the *Killer* tour, a fortnight before they made their *Top Of The Pops* debut with *School's Out*. Process that for a moment: when the Alice Cooper group last played Wembley they did so as relative unknowns. Consequently, pre-teen Brits who embraced the Cooper faith in the summer of '72 were never given the opportunity to gaze upon the macabre majesty of an original Alice Cooper performance. Until now.

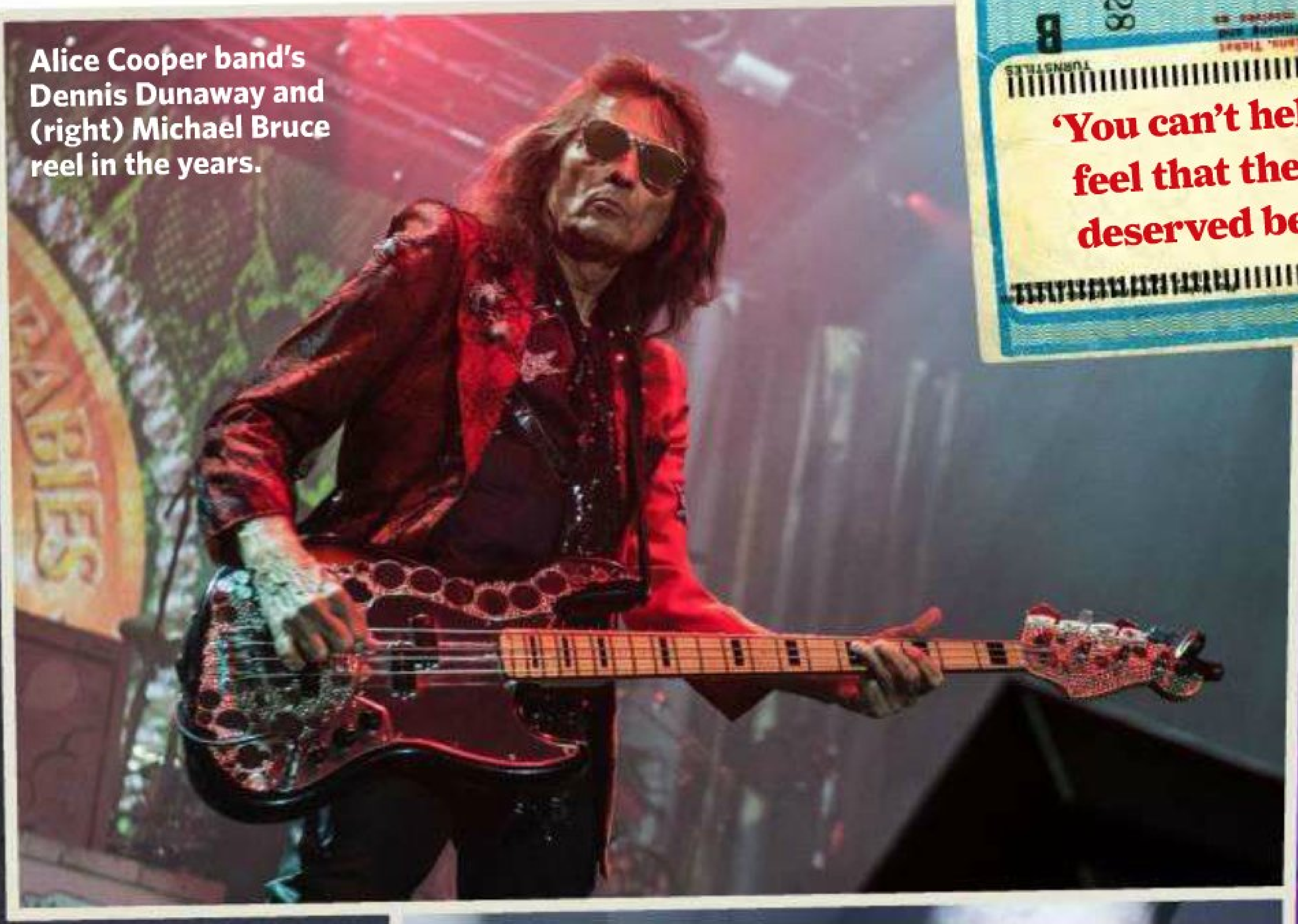
We enjoyed the legendary *Billion Dollar Babies* tour only vicariously; as tantalising press shots of on-stage hangings escalated to on-stage beheadings, our fervid imaginations ran riot. But the tour never left the Americas. Why would it? It grossed $4million at home. More even than the Stones' '72 US tour. And this was when $4million was still a lot of money. As a consequence, tonight there are a lot of very excited people, marvelling at just how small the bar's '3 for £6.50' pies are. Some punters have come cosmetically Coopered, while few look like they'd be best served by the imminent ingestion of three more pies of any size.

On arrival into the disconcerting pitch darkness of the arena the first thing that strikes you is the unaccountably Arctic conditions. Opening band The Tubes' stalwart frontman Fee Waybill runs through the band's time-honoured aprés-Zappa theatrics, changes his jacket – a lot – and does his level best to defrost an audience whose enthusiasm has been somewhat dimmed by being decanted into what feels like the world's biggest refrigerator.

The 67-year-old Waybill, certainly a trouper (if not quite a Cooper), climaxes an admirable turn by tottering about the stage precariously atop *White Punks On Dope* alter-ego Quay Lewd's giant platform boots. Which, as far as 42-year-old satire goes, remains quite the spectacle.

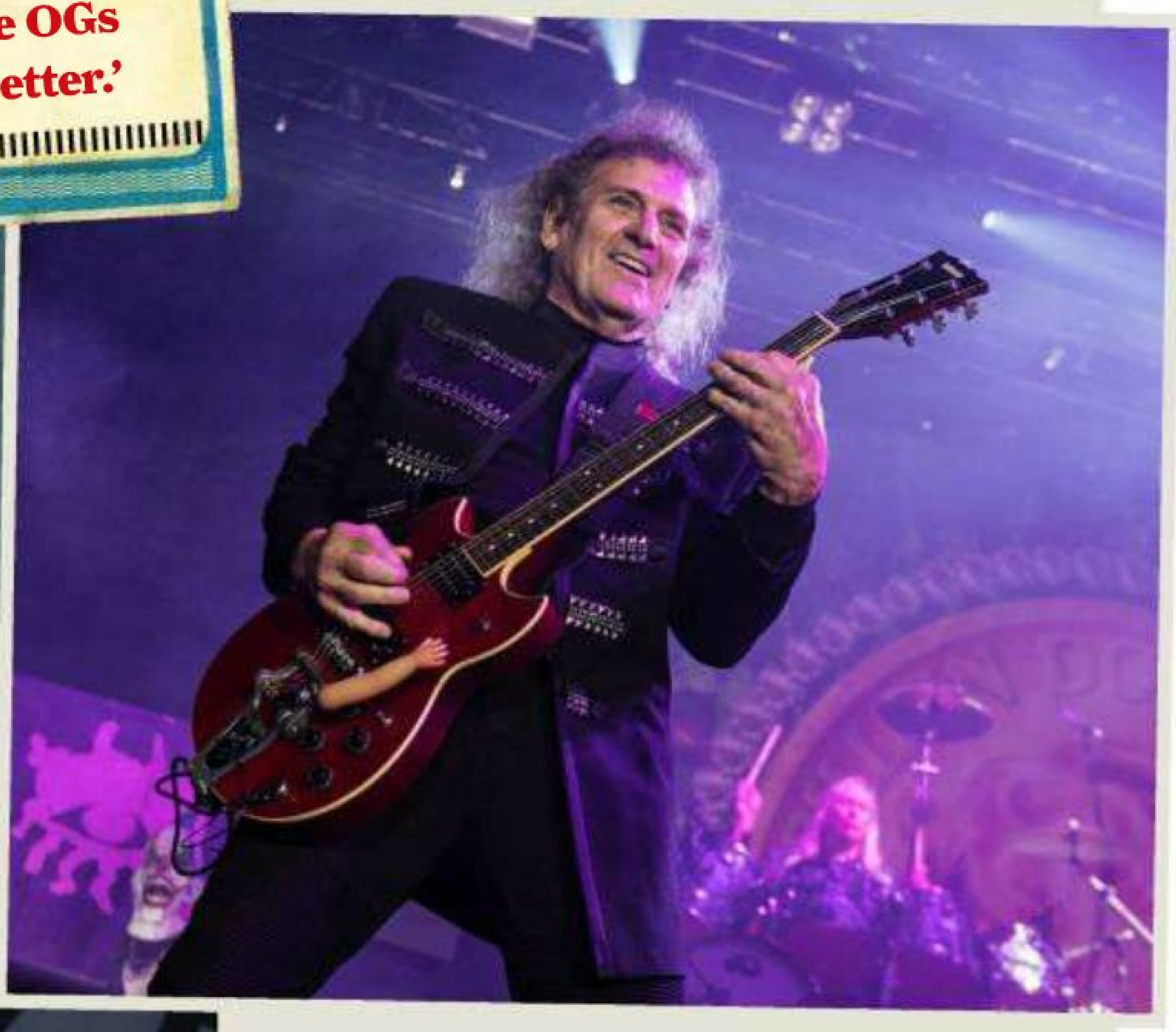
As polite applause rapidly decays, a brisk exodus toward the relative warmth of the grim utilitarian concrete bar ensues, leaving a hard-core to brave The Mission.

Alice Cooper: delivering an emotional kick in the crutch.



Alice Cooper band's Dennis Dunaway and (right) Michael Bruce reel in the years.

'You can't help but feel that the OGs deserved better.'



Mission impossible: Wayne Hussey.

The Tubes' Fee Waybill: still the trouper.

AC band's Nita Strauss: formidable techno-flash pyrotechnics.

Of course, other than the word 'gothic', The Mission and Alice Cooper have very little in common, and the majority of tonight's Cooper-favouring constituency of involuntarily cryogenically frozen thrill-seeking gore-hounds appear generally ambivalent to the band's mock-heroic jangling dirges. And as far as stagecraft goes, Wayne Hussey turning to his band to ask: "Is it cold in here?" is hardly going to assuage the desire of anyone expecting the imminent spectacle of a live decapitation. And while *Severina*, *Wasteland* and an ever unremarkable take on *Like A Hurricane* are all well and good for glumly raising one's hands aloft in the time-honoured goth tradition, they're hardly *Halo Of Flies*.

Of course, one of the reasons that Wembley Arena has been repeatedly chosen as the venue for Alice Cooper triumphs down the years is because it's big. Well, if you're viewing it from the stage or craning your neck from the front rows it's big, but if you're seated at the back it's huge. Many overcoat, scarf and hat-wrapped punters have taken cold comfort, while squinting at distant capering support-bill dots, from the fact that at least when Alice comes on there'll be screens and at least they'll be able to see.

Then Alice comes on… and there are no screens. Maybe it's a collective rage that finally raises the temperature, but putting aside all practical shortcomings associated with the audience experience, there's absolutely nothing wrong with what's happening on stage.

Opening, somewhat surprisingly, with *Brutal Planet*, the band are instantly aflame. The majority of the show is handled by the three-guitar/bass/drums line-up of Alice's latest touring band. Ryan Roxie is invariably an excellent six-stringed sparring partner for Alice, but at certain points in the show Nita Strauss's formidable techno-flash pyrotechnics all but steal the limelight; her solo prior to *Poison*, is staggeringly adept, if anachronistically self-indulgent. And so it continues, with all the time-honoured crowd-pleasers wheeled out to rapturous frenzy – *Under My Wheels*, *Department Of Youth* ("And who gave it to you?" "Justin Bieber!"), *Feed My Frankenstein*, *Killer*'s aforementioned magnum opus *Halo Of Flies* (always a highlight, especially so tonight) – before *The Ballad Of Dwight Fry*'s psychodrama, featuring the supernaturally ageless Sheryl Cooper (Alice's wife since '76) reprising her role as the sadistic sanitarium nurse – that ends with our hero losing his head to *I Love The Dead*.

And then, finally, the 'OGs'. In an explosion of exactly the kind of sequins they wore 'in the day', the Alice Cooper Group – Bruce, Dunaway and Smith (with Ryan Roxie in place of Buxton) – favour us with only four songs prior to the all-in *School's Out* finale, but they make them count. *I'm Eighteen*, their *Billion Dollar Babies* theme tune, *No More Mr Nice Guy* and a storming version of the title track of their *Muscle Of Love* swansong are a joy to behold. What they lack in slickness, they more than make up for in emotional impact. If this band toured an hour-long, frills-free set around intimate venues, they'd be unmissable.

'Tonight was unforgettable, in parts inspirational.'

Tonight was unforgettable, in parts inspirational, but with no screens, nor even snakes, in the budget you can't help but feel that the OGs (both on and off stage) deserved better.

Words: **Ian Fortnam** Photos: **Kevin Nixon**

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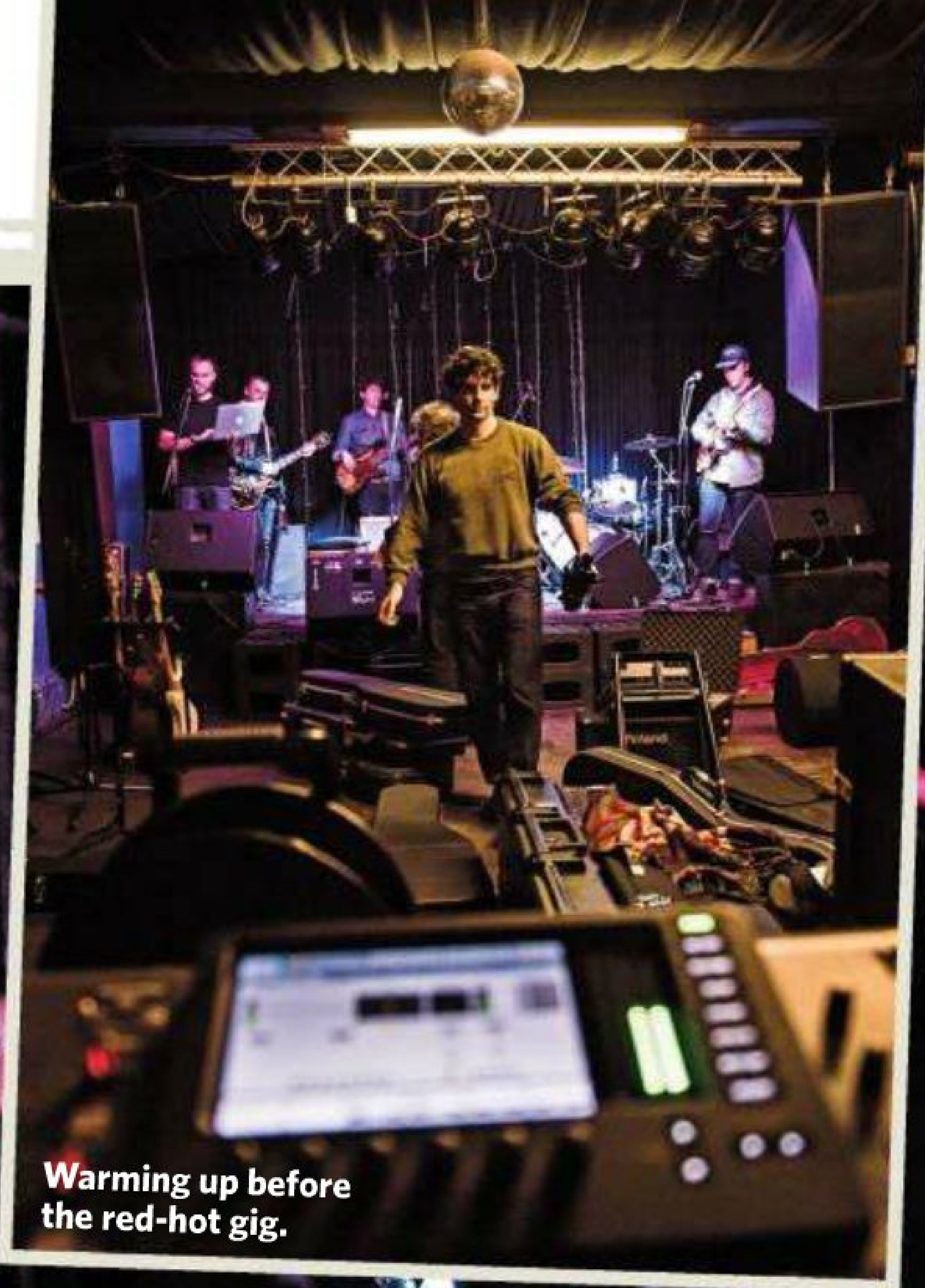
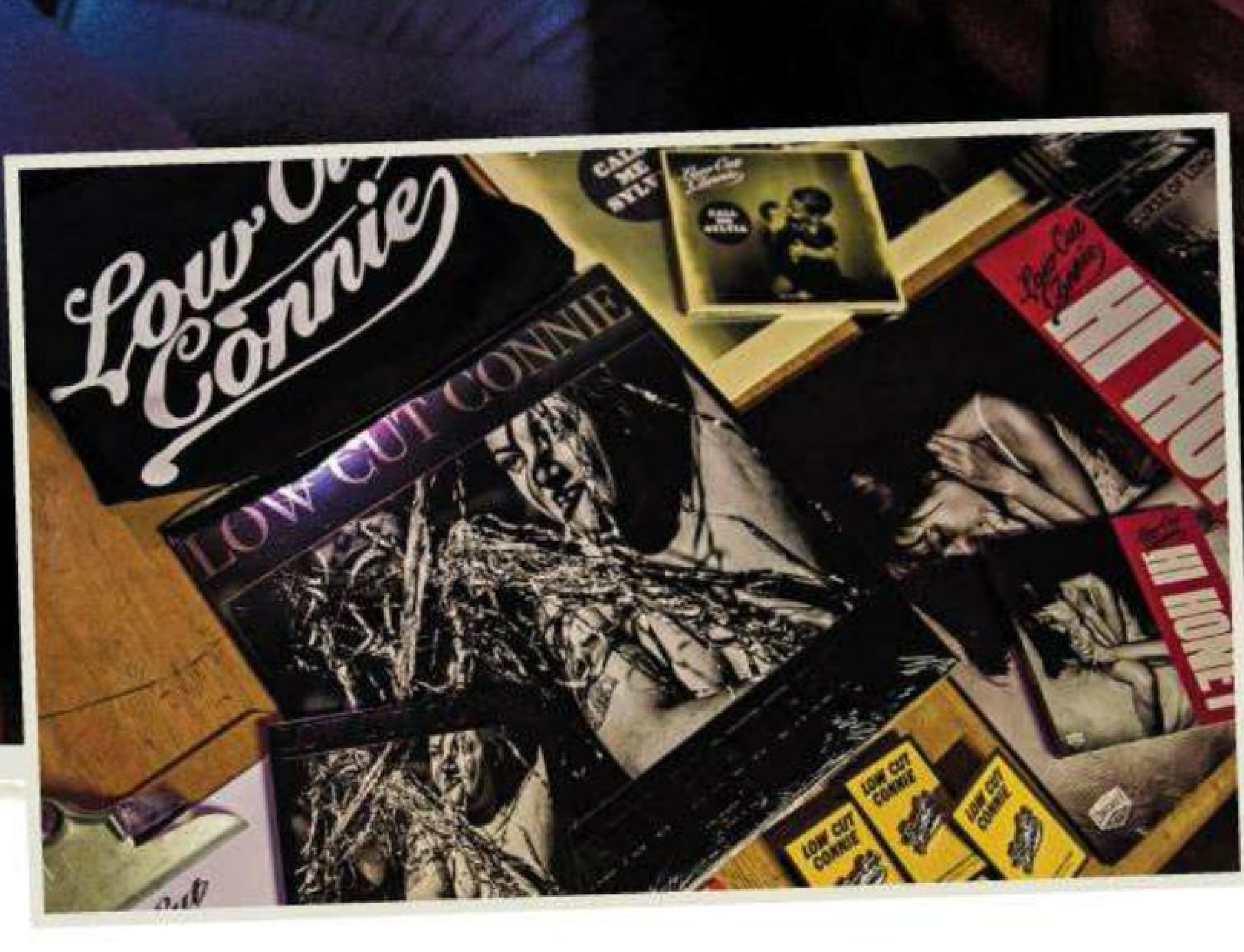
> 'Weiner performs ass-shaking dance moves and contortions.'

"Are you ready to testify?" Weiner gets to the point.



Warming up before the red-hot gig.



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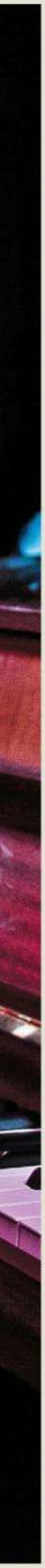


Low Cut Connie

Brighton Prince Albert

Rabble-rousing Philadelphians abuse instruments and plant life, lose at bar games but win big-time at rock'n'roll.

Getting up to some saucy antics.

★ Laurel and Hardy and many others since have turned it into comedy gold. It has caused damage to property and injuries or even death to humans and small animals alike. Removal operatives across the globe fear this task above all others. But tonight, just like many other nights, Adam Weiner's piano must be carried up the stairs to a small venue. And then carried back down a few hours later. At least by the time the latter task has to be completed, this hefty but handsome 30-stone beast will have shed a few pounds after it has featured prominently in a Low Cut Connie live show, in which it will lose several parts of its anatomy due to being pounded, drummed, stomped, walked on, jumped over and eventually tipped on its back in the name of rock'n'roll.

As we meet this Philadelphia quintet in their Brighton dressing room before a show at the Prince Albert public house, lead singer and ivory-tickler extraordinaire Weiner is doing careful stretching exercises. This is his way of preparing for the physical stresses and strains he regards as "an occupational hazard" of being one of America's most exuberant pianists and frontmen, and the head of a band and record label that can't afford to fly roadies to the UK to hump its gear around.

Nonetheless, few men you'll meet are more committed to their chosen path in life, and as he eyeballs your correspondent across the dressing room, it's with the intensity a preacher might display as he addresses a member of his flock.

"Johnny Sharp," he begins. "What's it like to have a cool name? I grew up with kids calling me 'A Weener' on a daily basis."

Painful though that must have been, it probably helped instil in this New Jersey native a strength of character that's serving him well right now. *Dirty Pictures (Part 1),* Low Cut Connie's fourth album on their own Contender label, has earned plaudits on both sides of the Atlantic for its raucous blend of piano boogie, rock'n'soul and kinetically charged barroom rhythm'n'blues. It was voted one of this magazine's albums of the year, and their single *Revolution Rock'n'roll* voted one of the top tracks. Their celebrity fans include Barack Obama and Elton John, and they've been sufficiently emboldened by their burgeoning live reputation back home to book a debut British tour.

And while a clutch of dates in UK venues on what has uncharitably been labelled 'the toilet circuit' might be a bit of a comedown given that the band have been selling out four-figure-capacity venues back home, but Weiner is only too happy to build up a fan base the old-fashioned way.

"We start in the dive bars and the little boozers – the toilet circuit, as you rather disrespectfully put it – and carry people up with us. You need to have those experiences when you're really close to the people you're trying to entertain so you can touch them, and then you go on a conversation with them through the different levels of venues. I'm appreciating this tour because we're eyeball-to-eyeball with all you snaggle-toothed British motherfuckers."

Weiner would like it to be known that he was not the one who brought up the issue of British mouths' infamously shoddy standards of dental care. Earlier he had introduced the band's bass player Lucas Rinz as 'Colgate', so nicknamed due to his toothy grin, and it led to a wide-ranging discussion about the cultural differences between our two nations.

Chewing gum and beer were sampled and broadly approved of, Twiglets and pork scratchings were picked at but generally eschewed, Waitrose chocolate was praised and our poor choice of salad options lamented. Your correspondent taught them the ancient British art of beer-mat flipping, and Mr Colgate foolishly set up a contest to find who could squirt as much ketchup directly into his mouth as humanly possible (they mainly have non-squeezy bottles over there so maybe they're easily impressed), resulting in a scene more befitting a 1984 Ozzy Osbourne photoshoot, and a crushing victory for the host nation.

> **"I like the bored, the hostile, the inattentive, because it makes you better at what you do."**
> **Adam Weiner**

A challenge these men are more suited to is winning over a crowd of any shape, size or complexion. In fact, it's a battle they relish. "I like the bored, the hostile, the inattentive, and the small audience," says Weiner, "because it makes you better at what you do."

He also seems to raise his game when faced with other logistical curveballs. Two nights previously, the band arrived at Gullivers in Manchester to discover that try as they might, Adam's hired piano (his regular upright, Shondra, couldn't be shipped over) wouldn't go up the stairs. It's a major snag for a band whose whole sound is based around the old Joanna.

Boozophilia: the band kick back before the show.

"It was our first show in five years without a piano, so I had to improvise. Backstage there was this beautiful yucca plant, and I carried it through the audience to the stage, convinced it would give me the spiritual strength to perform. I did whatever you can do on God's green earth with a stool and a chair and a yucca plant, and it turned out to be one of our best shows of the tour."

Couldn't they have sourced a digital piano from somewhere and played that? "That's like saying, 'Can't you have sex with a blow-up doll?'"

How did the plant respond? Was it revitalized by being sung to and is now growing faster than ever?

"Uh, no, it was ruined. It's kind of just mud now."

As explained earlier, there are no such problems with the band's central prop… yet. And even though tonight's show is not sold out, that doesn't worry our brave soldiers.

Guitarist James Everhart takes up the story: "Last year we played this shithole bar in Lincoln, Nebraska – Nirvana played there too, actually – and we get there and there's five people in the place, and they're wasted. They sell bowls of alcohol, not just glasses. So you can get a bowl of rum'n'coke for twenty bucks, and share it with your table, so these people are fuckin' lit at seven pm.

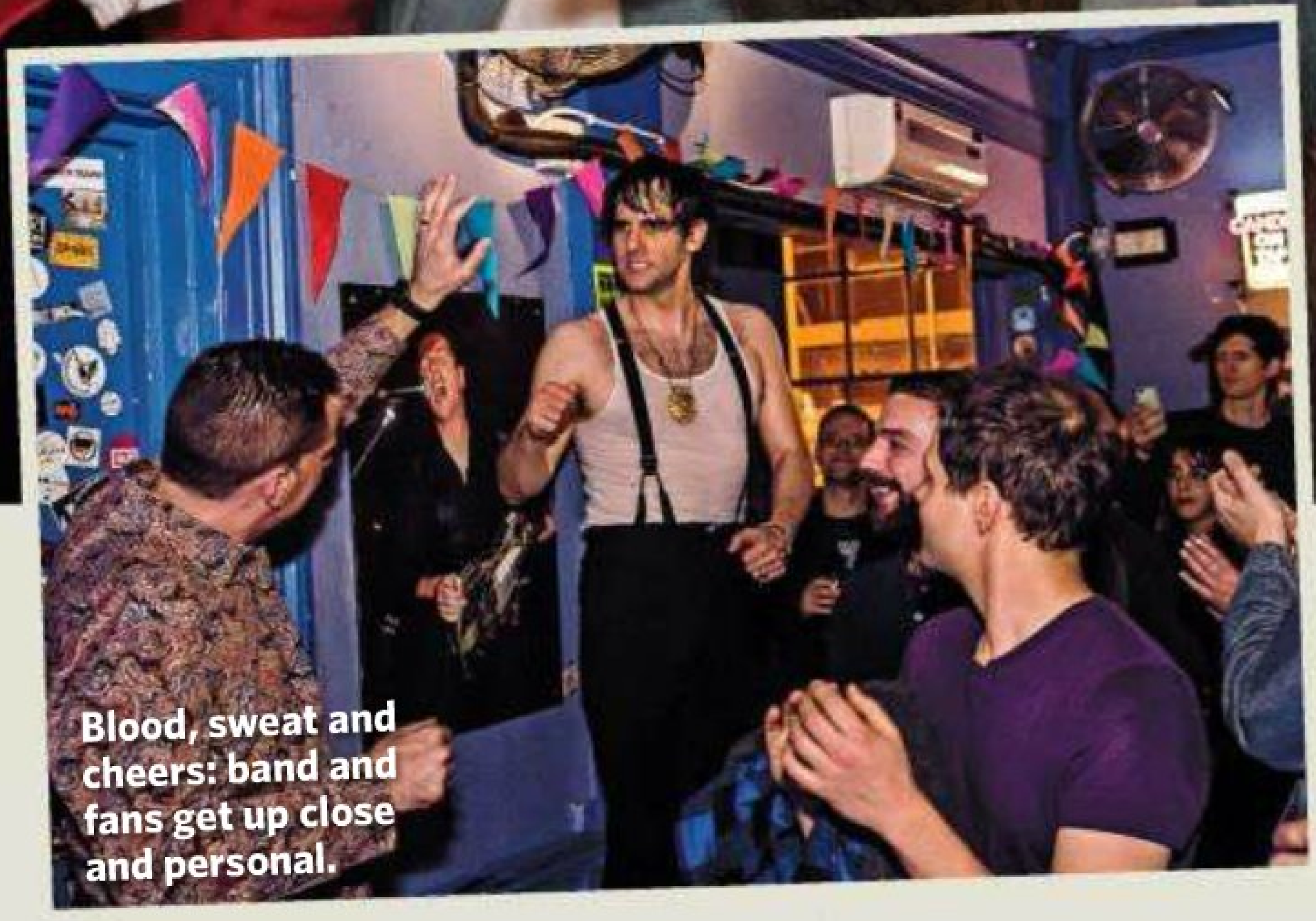
"One of the guys ended up puking all over the urinal as we were loading in. Then there was another guy there by the name of Chick, and he was about five-foot-five and three hundred and fifty pounds, with no shoes. Chick walked into the bathroom with no shoes, probably walked through the puke and the piss with no shoes. But this became a turn-on, because as Adam always says, the shows that are sold out are the easy ones. The ones with five people there are where you've got to dig it out.

"You can feel every single person's eyes when it's like that," says Rinz. "You can feel the judgment – it penetrates you. When there's a thousand, two thousand people, everyone thinks you must be good ▷

Low Cut Connie: (l-r) James Everhart, Will Donnelly, Adam Weiner, Lucas Rinz, Larry Scotton.

'Their sound gels into a righteous, romping racket.'

Larry Scotton (drums) and James Everhart.



Blood, sweat and cheers: band and fans get up close and personal.

enough to play there so everything you do they cheer and think it's brilliant. When there's six people, they're like, 'Okay, there's only six of us, so you probably suck. Whaddya got for us?'

"So Adam ends up standing on the bar, in his long john underwear, stripped down, and he had a pumpkin and a cigarette in his mouth, and he's jumping up and down everywhere – and the bartenders don't even look up from their phones.

"I'm in my fucking underwear," says Weiner, "jumping up and down on the bar, whipping people with the mic cord, and I'm like, 'What else can a man do?'"

"I think it's the most fun I've ever had in the band," adds Rinz.

He shows *Classic Rock* a picture of that night, which resembles a very low-budget, macabre sequel to the *Halloween* series. Can this evening possibly match that?

Probably not, given that the audience are already around 60 strong when the band gather at the door of their dressing room, raise a tequila glass each and shout their pre-gig motivational slogan: "Slow! Heavy! Sexy! Nasty!"

Thus fortified, Mr Weiner, resplendent in a wife-beater vest and velour jacket, along with a garish gold amulet, takes his seat at the piano and instantly locks eyes with each person in the front row, one hand on the piano, the other pointing at each punter in turn, as if asking them, MC5-style, "Are you ready to testify?"

Possibly not quite yet, but many are mentally preparing their statements by the end of second number *Boozophilia*, as Weiner has already performed the kind of stool-perching gymnastics, ass-shaking dance moves and elastic mic-stand contortions that would make Jerry Lee Lewis look like a member of Kraftwerk in comparison. Rhythm guitarist 'Baby-faced' Will Donnelly is the first casualty, as Weiner manages to kick him squarely in the quiff.

> **"I'm in my underwear, jumping on the bar, whipping people…"**
> **Adam Weiner**

Meanwhile, his bandmates look on in amusement, as if wondering what stunt the guy in front of them is going to pull tonight, but nonetheless manage to keep a gutsy groove right on the money.

Laconic sticksman Larry Scotton is resplendent in a bobble hat, while guitarist James Everhart has half his face obscured by an oversized trucker's cap. They may look like they've been recruited from a nearby soup kitchen compared to Weiner and their handsomely leather-clad bandmate Donnelly, but despite the contrast between them and their suavely besuited counterparts, the disjointed appearance of it all somehow adds to the feeling of their band being a happy accident… which, according to Weiner, it kind of was.

"When this whole thing started, it wasn't intended to span time," he said earlier. "It wasn't like we were The Clash and there was a mission statement and we were going to take over the world. It was seat-of-our-pants – 'This isn't gonna last six months so let's have fun for a few weekends.'

Piano magic: Weiner balances showmanship with musical chops.

Revolution rock'n'roll in action.

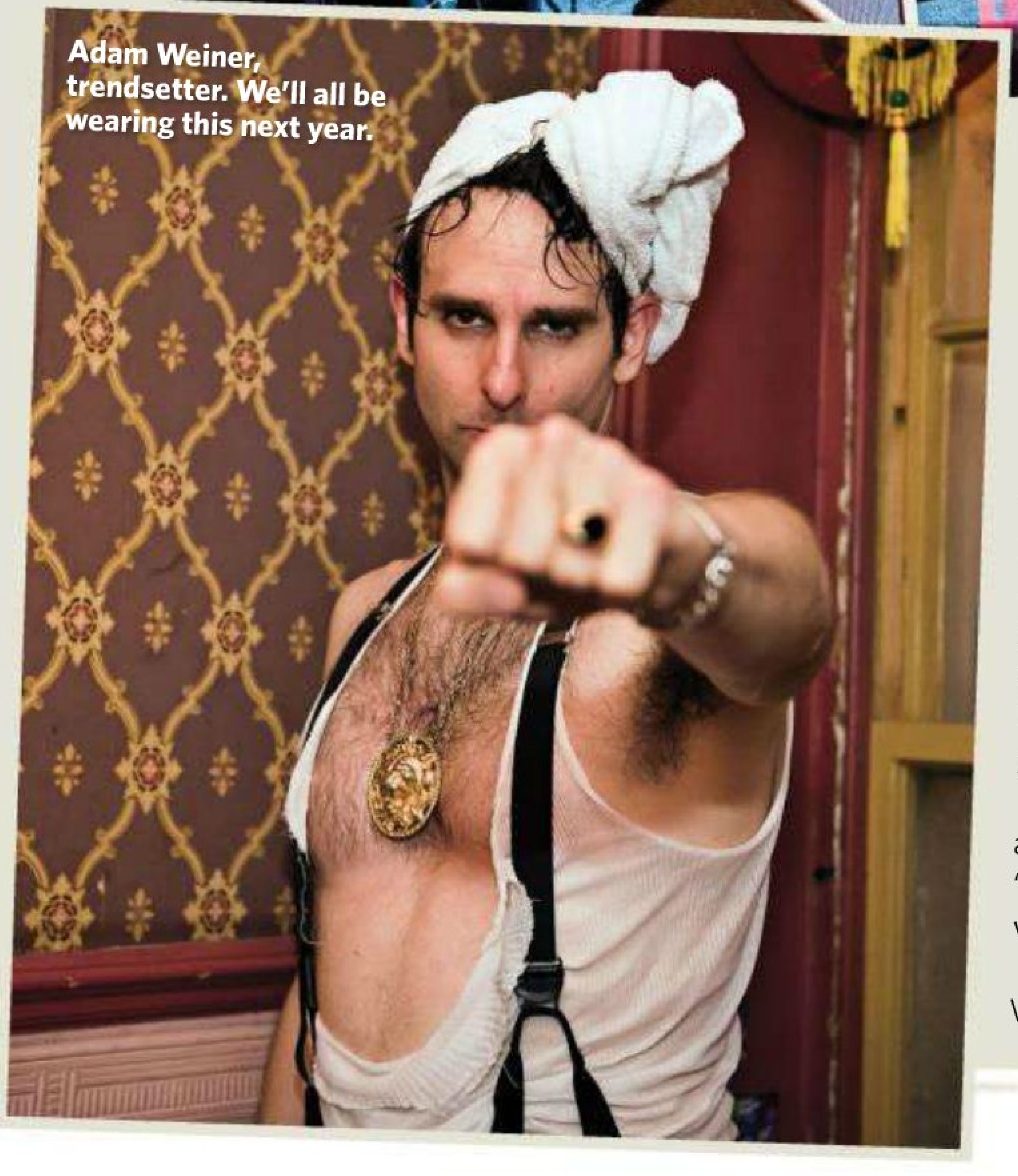
"Rock'n'roll used to be the dumb thing you did to not get a job. You weren't supposed to try. It's only recently we've gotten better, and really turned into a solid crew."

Try they most certainly do tonight. And their sound really gels into a righteous romping racket on the triple punch of *Shake It Little Tina*, *Dirty Water* and *Revolution Rock'n'roll*, during which the Prince Albert's stage can no longer contain Weiner's performance, and he's down in the crowd, lashing the sweat from his reverse mullet fringe across our helpless chins.

"I love each and every one of you, Brighton," he says with the hint of a smirk, and it's a feeling that's getting more mutual with every passing number. When they finish the set with a cover of Bowie's *Diamond Dogs*, you're reminded of how much great rock music has been piano-based, and how well this band rekindle that percussive, insistent spirit.

When they then encore with their chunky, funky version of Prince's *Controversy*, it turns into an anthem to inclusive rock'n'roll anarchy as we chant together, *'People call me rude, I wish we all were nude/I wish there was no black or white, I wish there were no rules.'*

Perhaps thankfully, the nudity part of the equation doesn't come to pass, but the normal rules of polite behaviour soon get a further trashing when Donnelly and Everhart, following their leader's example, climb on top of the piano as the show reaches a crescendo and Weiner struts off, peacock-like, to the wings. The only problem is that they don't share his skill at piano surfing, and soon the whole thing comes crashing to the floor, removing the top and back of the instrument like a collapsing car in a Buster Keaton movie.



Adam Weiner, trendsetter. We'll all be wearing this next year.

High jinks indeed. But when we visit the band backstage afterwards, Weiner's piercing glare and bold pronouncements have gone, replaced by a glazed, punch-drunk expression and a soft whisper.

It reminds us of something he told us earlier: "All my favourite performers leave everything on the stage. They are the facilitators of a wild time for the audience, but then when the show's over, they're often quite introverted. So when I'm done I find myself completely drained, and I need to go off into my cave and not exist for a while. I need to go recharge my batteries so I can go again the next night."

Fair enough, but what if there's no piano after tonight's show? "It's fine," he murmurs. "We can patch it back together. But… I think we might not get our deposit back."

Words: **Johnny Sharp** Photos: **Will Ireland**

back issues: storemags.com

'Lambert gets away with more fruity innuendo than even Mercury did.'

Queen + Adam Lambert

Liverpool Echo Arena

Turbo-charged and "thrillingly camp", the latest incarnation of the Queen show comes to town (lasers, prancing and mirror ball included).

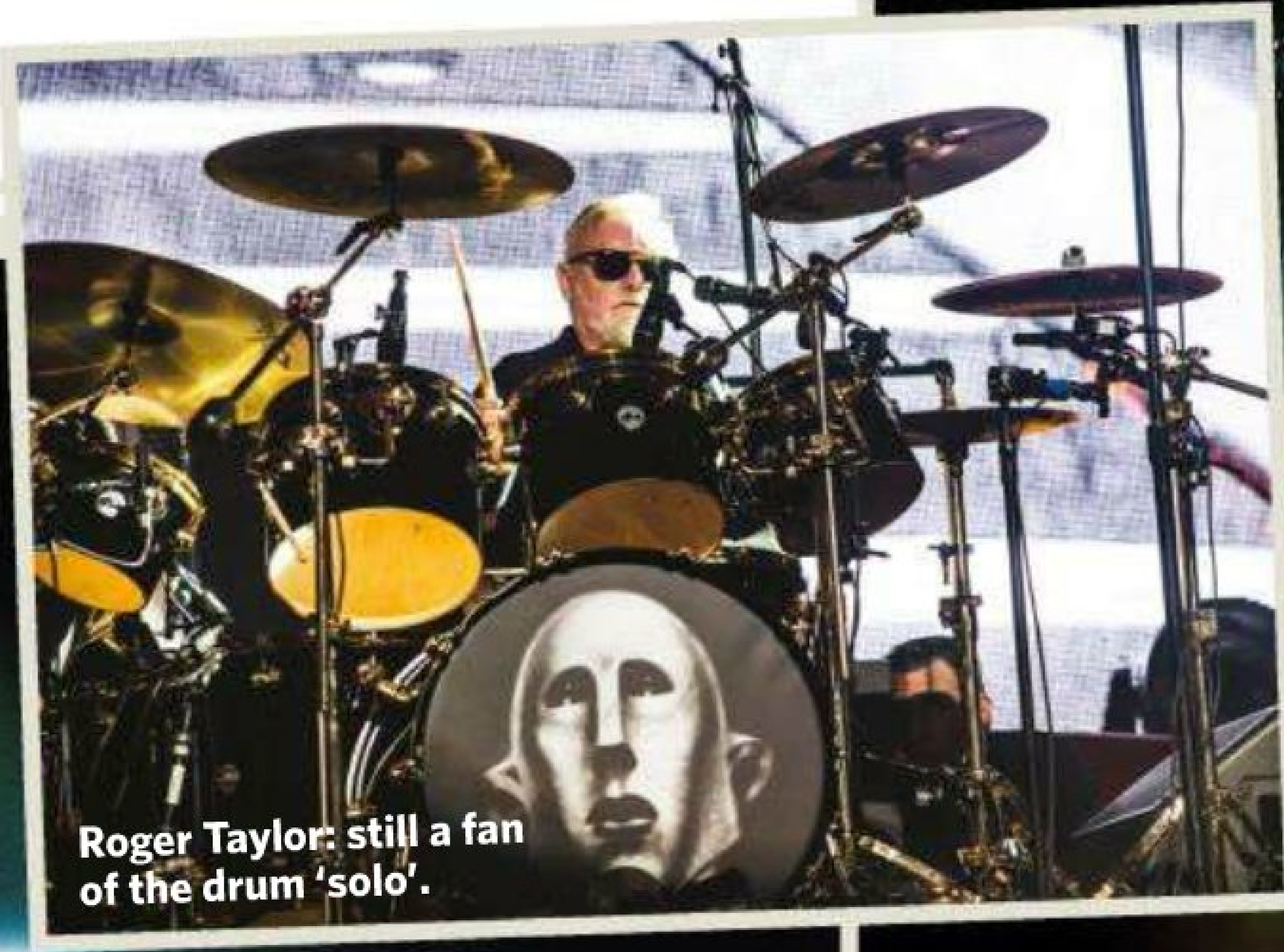
★ Who wants to live forever? Almost fifty years into their career, Queen seem to be giving it a good go with their latest world tour, a dazzling transatlantic blend of slick Las Vegas production and Last Night Of The Proms exaltation.

A decade ago, with Paul Rodgers standing in for the late Freddie Mercury, Queen's live show was a depressingly stale and blokey affair. But their current reincarnation, with *American Idol* veteran Adam Lambert on the microphone, feels much more in tune with Mercury's eternally youthful turbo-glam attitude. Dynamic and flamboyant, the 35-year-old Lambert is literally half the age of Brian May. More importantly, he can still muster the swashbuckling swagger and tight-trousered showmanship that these ageless baroque'n'roll anthems demand.

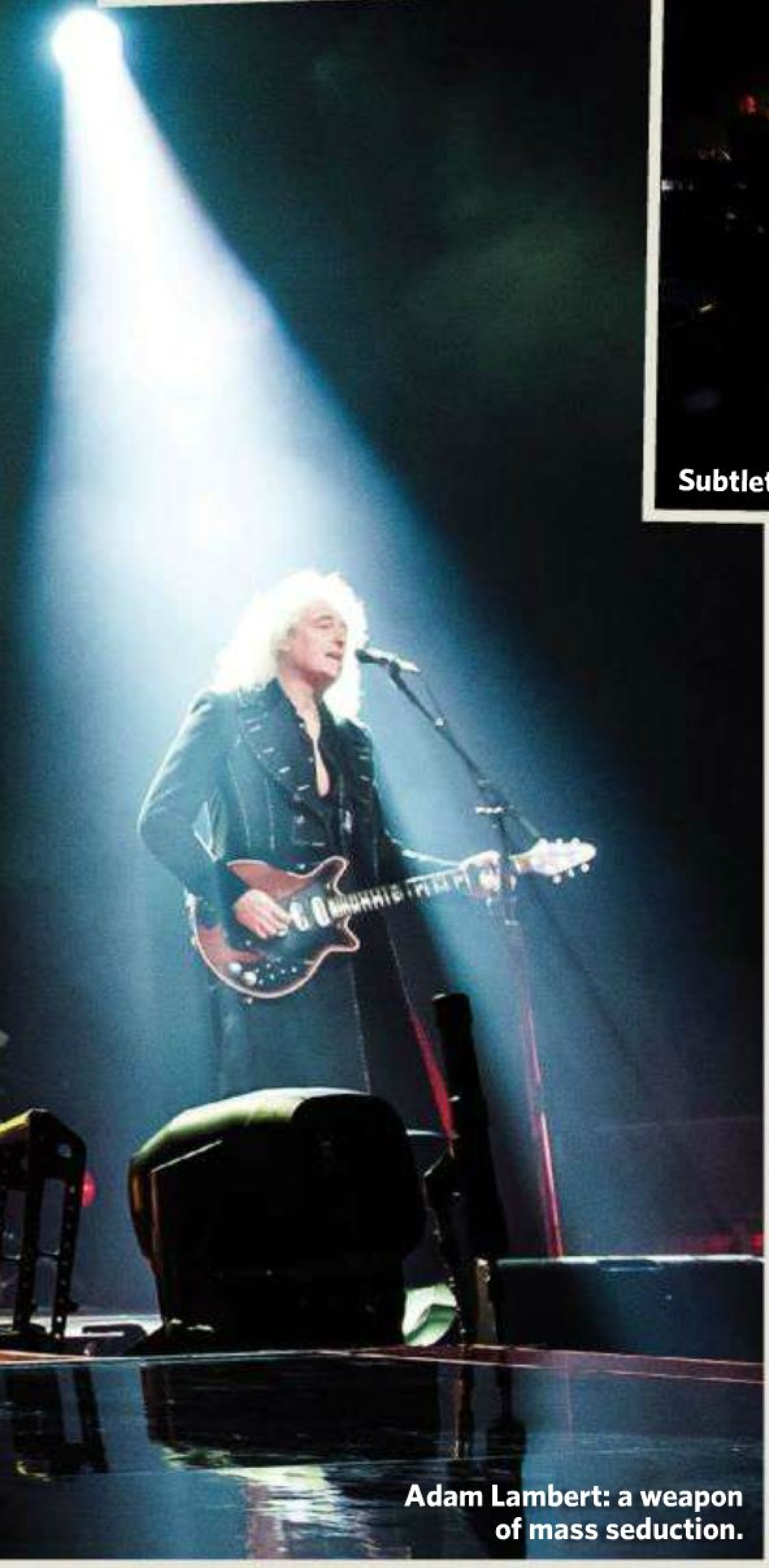
But Lambert is not the only weapon of mass seduction. Disproving that ancient proverb about old dogs not learning new tricks, Queen's current touring show is their most high-tech yet; a sci-fi spectacular featuring a huge pair of transparent video walls, an eight-ton kinetic lighting rig which twists and tilts high above the band, a 21-metre catwalk stage modelled on the neck of May's guitar, a giant disco mirrorball, and a dazzling arsenal of rainbow-coloured lasers. Understatement is so overrated, darlings.

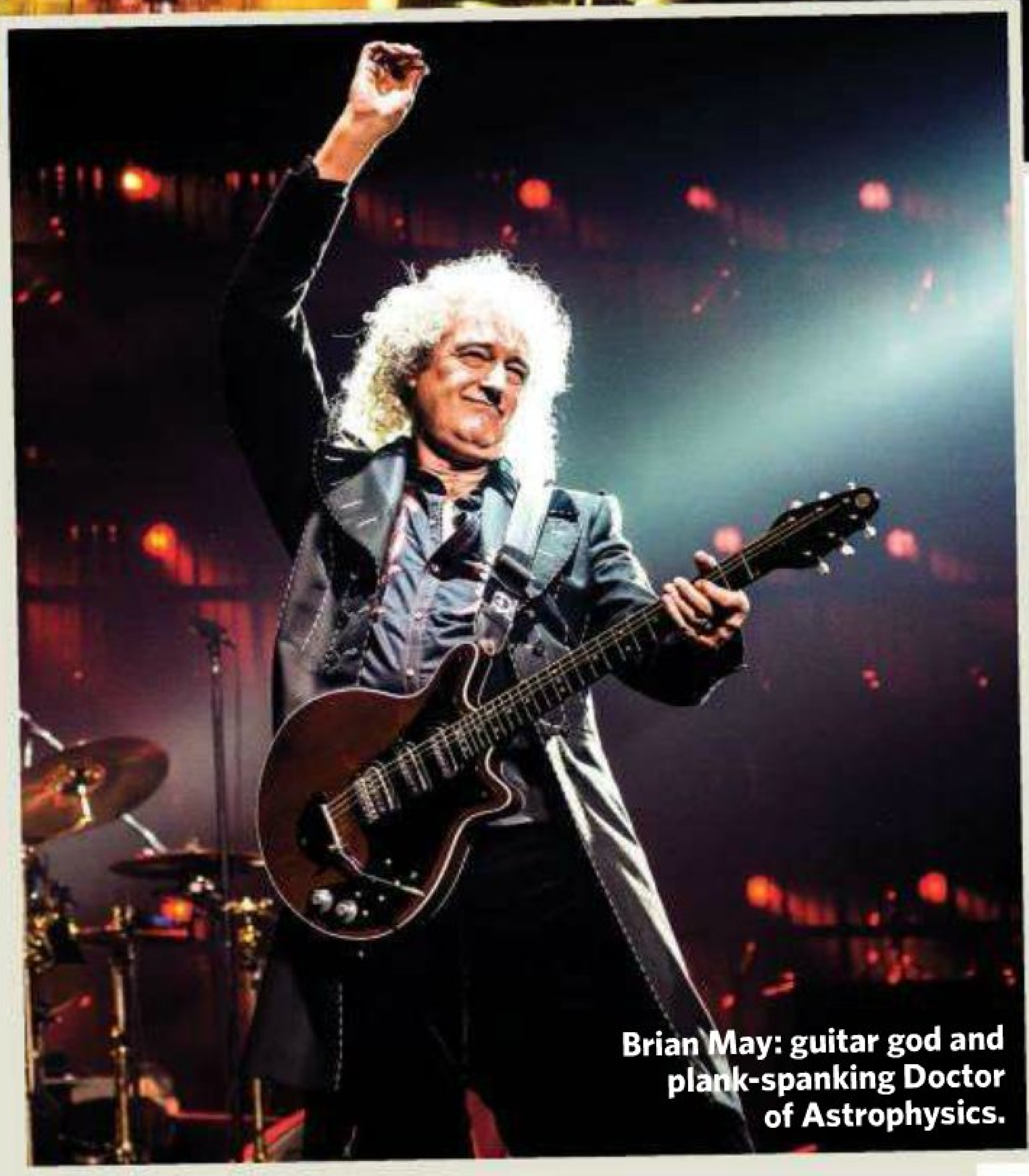
This world tour loosely coincides with the 40th anniversary reissue of Queen's classic 1977 album *News Of The World*. The giant silver robot from the sleeve artwork makes appearances throughout this show, on video and in animatronic form. But the set list only lightly reflects the album: just three tracks, including regular live standards *We Will Rock You* and *We Are the Champions*. Even so, *Get Down, Make Love* makes a welcome comeback to Queen's latterday repertoire, its saucy lyric and ripsnorting blues-rock energy underscored by eroticised Pop Art visuals that invoke a kind of Beatle-ish psychedelic surrealism.

Lambert may be no match for Mercury in stage-commanding charisma and operatic vocal power, but he still possesses a muscular voice, and arguably even upstages his predecessor in his stack-heeled camp and outlandish costume changes. "Pfff, he's no Freddie!" the singer winks before taking a running jump at the vaulting melodrama of *Don't Stop Me Now*. Preening and prancing and agreeably sleazy for an arena-


Roger Taylor: still a fan of the drum 'solo'.

Subtlety? Forget it.


Adam Lambert: a weapon of mass seduction.


Brian May: guitar god and plank-spanking Doctor of Astrophysics.

rocking family entertainer, Lambert gets away with more fruity innuendo than even Mercury ever dared. He delivers *Fat Bottomed Girls* draped atop a giant hydraulic replica of the robot head from the *News Of The World* sleeve, nicknamed "Frank" in honour of its original creator Frank Kelly Freas. "Frank is so far up my ass tonight," Lambert pouts. "But he gives good head."

For *Bicycle Race*, the singer scoots across the stage on a hot pink tricycle and flaunts his lurid purple outfit, proclaiming it "the gayest fucking suit you've ever seen". In a world of safely sexless, heteronormative, third-generation Mercury impersonators, Lambert's vigorous probing of Queen's queer hinterland is refreshingly brazen. Freddie would be proud. Or possibly jealous.

Freddie makes several video cameos, appearing fresh-faced in some lovely 1970s archive footage as Roger Taylor takes lead vocal on *These Are The Days Of Our Lives*. A slightly older Mercury also appears in a short clip of his signature audience-baiting "day-oh" chant, which concludes with a wicked four-letter smirk. He may have been dead for over two decades, but Britrock's once and future king still has arena audiences eating out of his hands.

"Who would have thought I'd still be doing this stuff at 95"? May quips during a mid-set solo interlude, paying homage to the Liverpool setting with an acoustic cover of the Beatles' *You've Got To Hide Your Love Away*, which turns the arena into a giant pub sing-along. He follows this with a strum through *Love Of My Life*, Mercury's tender tribute to his long-time soulmate Mary Austin. Ever the science nerd, May then whips out a "stereoscopic selfie stick" and projects live panoramic footage of the crowd onto the screens behind him. A goofy stunt but effective.

Later, May blasts out his 1993 guitar instrumental *Last Horizon* high above the stage on an elevated platform designed to resemble Frank's robot hand. Against a backdrop of Martian moonscapes, the plank-spanking Doctor of Astrophysics goes into a reverie of prog-rocking intergalactic excess. It's not quite rocket science, but it is as preposterously exciting as any pretender like Muse or The Darkness. If May doesn't make the shortlist to be the next Doctor Who, we clearly live in a shit universe.

Admittedly a few of these numbers are beginning to show their age. Once monumental, *I Want It All* now trundles and drags a little, while *Crazy Little Thing Called Love* feels perfunctory and bloodless. Roger Taylor's traditional 'drum battle' with percussionist Tyler Warren also feels like more of an indulgence for the band than something performed for the fans; a chance to prove that Queen are still a 'real' band who shun modern gimmicks such as playing to click tracks. As if anyone cares a jot about such quaint notions of authenticity in a sense-swamping high-tech production that is essentially a two-hour fireworks display with a Hollywood blockbuster budget.

'Their antics remain the most thrillingly camp spectacle ever to fill a giant arena.'

For the majestically overblown climax, an avalanche of anthems from *Bohemian Rhapsody* to *We Are The Champions*, May dons a wizard's cape while Lambert wears a sparkly crown in homage to Mercury. They bow out to *God Save The Queen*, a statement that feels thumpingly sincere *and* daringly subversive, like the Sex Pistols playing on the roof of Buckingham Palace.

After half a century on the throne, Queen are still uniquely eccentric national treasures, the crowned heads of a very British kind of pomp-rock pageantry, all delivered with various tongues in multiple cheeks. Until the day when synchronised fisting is admitted into the Olympics, the antics of May, Taylor and Lambert will remain the most thrillingly camp spectacle ever to fill a giant arena.

Words: **Stephen Dalton** Photos: **Will Ireland**

'Misty Mountain Hop turns into blistering hillside rumble.'

Robert Plant
& The Sensational Shapeshifters
Glasgow SEC Armadillo

Mr P doesn't forget his past as he takes his brilliant new album on the road,

Time in England seems to have rejuvenated his senses, with the Golden God admitting that he had grown weary of being "Rockaday Johnny in America". With incense smoke drifting through the front rows, Robert Plant arrives on stage to the cheers of people unperturbed by being asked by security to sit down.

Opener *New World* sets the tone for a set which blends Led Zep's more mystical folk elements, such as *That's The Way*, with Plant's Sensational Space Shifters material. Justin Adams, Plant's "captain of the ship", stabs around the stage and stands legs akimbo while delivering some full-throttle blues and North African rhythms on *Turn It Up*.

Before *Gallows Pole* the singer refers to "red-faced Scottish cousins" in the Deep South. With the addition of Seth Lakeman on fiddle, *Misty Mountain Hop* turns into blistering hillside rumble. Skin Tyson clearly means business when he straps on a 1972 Les Paul Signature, and creates some beautiful tones on *What Is And What Should Never Be,* and the chemistry between both guitarists is delightful. Elsewhere *Carry Fire* summons an olde-world energy which finds Plant exorcising ghosts. When fans make their way down the front for *Whole Lotta Love*, venue staff get a bit handy. Plant gives the nod for his security to get involved and the fans are soon left well alone. A guy in a 'Jimmy Page Changed My Life' T-shirt basks in the glory long after Plant has left the stage.

Richard Purden

Robert Plant: exorcising ghosts – and looking after security-manhandled fans.

Queens Of The Stone Age
London O2 Arena

Josh and his hommes bolster their position as arena rock royalty.

Tonight Queens play their second London show of the week, surrounded by springy lights that sprout from the stage and make it look like a futuristic forest. It's been 20 years since they first came along and sent a jolt through rock with their genuinely unique, playful yet seductive desert rock'n'roll, and now they're confidently commanding the O2.

Promoting new album *Villians*, their set comprises five songs from that dance-worthy selection of desert disco, but they dig into the archives for heavier favourites such as *No One Knows*, dropped in halfway through the set, and encore with *Regular John* from their 1998 debut.

Josh Homme is one of modern rock's greatest frontmen, with a voice that swings from bluesey warble to falsetto. The towering six-foot 'ginger Elvis' has swagger in spades, macho charisma and a no-fucks-given attitude as he puffs on a cigarette and tells the crowd to "Cut loose. Take your fucking pants off."

The audience are pumped as they bounce in unison to songs like jaunty new album opener *Feet Don't Fail Me Now* and, interestingly, react with the most excitement to older big hitters such as *Go With The Flow* and the songs from the new album.

Think headliner-worthy big festival acts are drying up? Tonight proves that QOTSA are poised to take over.

Hannah May Kilroy

Blues Pills
London Jazz Café

Raw potential morphs into major talent.

There's a pivotal moment in the career of any big band when they cease to be young caterpillars and emerge from their chrysalis recognisable as magnificent butterflies. For Blues Pills that moment is here.

From the opening chords of *Lady In Gold* there's something special about tonight's show. Perhaps it's the devoted hysteria inside the packed venue. Maybe it's Ellin Larsson's sensual tumbling vocals. Or it could be the fluid guitar playing of Dorian Sorriaux. Whatever, the performance bears the pulsing beat of a world-class band.

When you listen to the way in which Larsson and Sorriaux interact it makes you feel that you've gone back on an alternative timeline, where Grace Slick and Paul Kossoff hooked up. This is blatantly clear when the whole band – and the other three members certainly play a full role, and are not just a supporting cast to the Larsson/Sorriaux alliance – open up, letting musical inspiration pour out during *Little Preacher Boy* and *Astralplane*. This is psychedelic jamming at its joyous best.

But a crucial melodic discipline is maintained during *High Class Woman* and *Devil Man*, which are genuine anthems, and when the band stride into a cover of Jefferson Airplane's classic *Somebody To Love* the connection is complete. Blues Pills are natural successors to such 60s immortals.

Malcolm Dome

The Temperance Movement
London The Borderline

It's shades indoors for these blues rockers after supporting the Stones.

There's a jollier, boozier atmosphere than you'd expect from a Monday night gig. Since forming in 2011, the Temperance Movement have brought their freshened taken on blues-meets-classic rock to bigger spaces, touring with the Stones and hitting the Top 20 along the way. So even with the relative upheaval of two band replacements (guitarist Matt White and drummer Simon Lea) in the past two years, it's not surprising that the Borderline is stuffed with fans eager for a first shot of new material, along with treasured favourites such as *Only Friend* and *Take It Back*.

This is a confident, 'we've-done-the-rock-star-thing' Temperance Movement – in a good way. Harmonies are spacey and arena-friendly. Songs are hammered out with cocksure bite. Singer Phil Campbell is wearing shades. And they're clearly delighted by the happy mob in front of them. Inevitably the feverishly convulsing Campbell is the visual focus. Part electrocuted chicken, part hippie cult leader in his white grandad shirt, his guttural, throaty vocals are pure rock'n'roll, but you can hear the folky intimacy of his pre-TM experience in softer moments like *A Deeper Cut* (the title track from the upcoming LP) and *Pride*.

Sonically the new material draws from the same well as their previous work, albeit with renewed oomph, so it's gleefully lapped up, right up to the end with new song *Backwater Zoo* and a jammed-out *Battle Lines*.

Polly Glass

LENNY WARREN

The Yardbirds

Continued from page 51

played on this occasion by Chris Karan. This was Page's interpretation of folk maverick Davy Graham's famous version of *She Moved Through The Fair* (or, more accurately, Graham's own later reinterpretation of the song as *She Moved Through The Bizarre/Blue Ragga*), with its unique D-A-D-G-A-D tuning – a signature Graham tuning he had devised for playing Moroccan music, that also proved especially efficacious for the accompaniment of ancient modal Irish tunes.

"I was going to add on the sitar part," Page later he told *Vibrations* magazine. "But when I got down to the studio the following day the producer had sort of reduced the whole thing. I can assure you in the future we will take longer ,because we are so despondent about the whole thing."

The producer in question, Mickie Most, was in fact utterly disdainful of Page's attempts to draw The Yardbirds out of their pop chart comfort zone and into… something else.

"There had been some pretty substantial work done by Jeff there in The Yardbirds, some fabulous stuff," Page recalled in 2014. "But I really needed to make my own sort of statement. So I was starting to showcase some of the various areas that I'd been involved with in my own learning curve – all the different styles and everything. I saw that that was the right way to go."

He would find a stronger ally in the new tour manager Most had hired for the band, a guy called Peter Grant.

Grant, the most feared figure in the Led Zeppelin story – his reputation for 'protecting' his artists, learned at the knee of Don Arden – is someone Chris Dreja now describes as "a wonderful guy. A lovely human being."

He recalls how in The Yardbirds, "Peter was very hands-on. He worked in an office with Mickie Most. They had two desks opposite each other. And he came on the road. It was amazing. He came on all the tours with us. Held it all together. He taught me how to make money – not have too much room service, all these little things. I loved the guy. We spent time at his house. He played me the first cut of *Stairway To Heaven*, with a few mistakes in it by Jimmy. Which he obviously corrected later.

"Peter was a wonderful guy. He was very kind to me. He loved his artists. I know he could be a real bastard in real life with other people, but as far as the artists were concerned he really had a rapport with them."

He certainly did. Especially with the band's go-go-go guitarist, Jimmy Page.

When *Little Games* failed dismally in the charts, it was the end of the road for Keith Relf and Jim McCarty. Unlike Page, who had yet to climb the mountain, in terms of his own creativity, Relf and McCarty now felt they had been there, done that, worn out the T-shirt. The thought of following Page on some new musical odyssey was simply too much wishful thinking for them. Having been in a band that had sacrificed so much to reach the top of the singles charts, the idea of somehow reversing gear and from now on concentrating instead on albums, on yet more live shows, on lengthier and more demanding tours than ever before, simply did not go down well.

By the time they arrived in New York for their Anderson Theatre show on March 30, 1968, Relf and McCarty had already made up their minds. And so had Page and Dreja.

There was a final Yardbirds single, the aptly titled *Goodnight Sweet Josephine*. It was another big flop. Although on its B-side lay the future: the Relf-Page-McCarty-credited *Think About It*, replete with a frantically shredded Page solo that would later turn up, almost intact, as the guitar solo of another number the band had recently begun playing live called *Dazed And Confused*. Page firing from the hip on his Telecaster, having stripped the blonde paint off and hand-painted a green, red and orange psychedelic dragon on the front of its ash body.

You can hear it in all its vivid glory on the *Yardbirds '68* album – a fact which Page must be given enormous credit for, demonstrating that the

'It's impossible to listen to *Little Games* and see it as anything other than a perceptible Led Zeppelin album.'

track which he would be given sole credit for on the first Led Zeppelin album, and which became his live showcase throughout all of Zeppelin's best moments on stage, was actually another important piece of the jigsaw originally begun, in embryonic form, during his stint as the creative driver of The Yardbirds.

It was based on a song by the same name written by Jake Holmes, who had opened for The Yardbirds at the Village Theatre in New York's Greenwich Village the previous summer. McCarty and Page were so impressed with it that they went out the following day and bought a copy of *The Above Ground Sound Of Jake Holmes*, specifically to hear *Dazed And Confused* again. The band reworked it, with different lyrics by Relf, into the electric cathedral you can hear on *Yardbirds '68*.

"Jimmy's always been funny about that," Chris Dreja says, laughing. "I did the first bass line for that song, you know? No one knows that, but I did."

McCarty is similarly lighthearted on the subject. "I think that was to do probably with trying to protect Led Zeppelin." He insists he "never really thought about" enquiring into the question of royalties. "I didn't really listen to Led Zeppelin until some years later. And everyone, including The Yardbirds, were always lifting ideas and making them into their own."

"I'm very fond of what Jimmy has done with it," Dreja adds. "And what he's done on this album is fucking dynamite! He's a very clever man."

"When I heard those tracks after twenty years or so," says McCarty, "I thought: 'These are much better than I remember." There is also a second collection of tracks that comes with *Yardbirds '68*: eight tracks of demos recorded in New York on the same trip, under the title Studio Sketches.

Some of these tracks – such as the rollicking band composition *Avron Knows* and the mystical drifting *Spanish Blood* – have been released before, on the *Cumular Limit* Yardbirds collection of 2000. Of most interest to hard-core Zep-heads on *Yardbirds '68* will be the track *Knowing That I'm Losing You* – better known these days, with an extra verse and somewhat fuller arrangement, as *Tangerine*, from *Led Zeppelin III*.

Chris Dreja admits that in the past he had felt "a bit cheated" by what he courteously calls the "overlap" between The Yardbirds and Zeppelin. "I mean, Jim McCarty was more involved in the writing [of *Knowing That I'm Losing You*] than I was. But all these years later there's a real buzz about having the original Yardbirds version out there. Jimmy's like, that's what happened, that was it, but we got over it, sort of thing. So we've moved on."

Indeed speaking with McCarty and Dreja, the feeling now is one of positivity and bygones. McCarty goes as far as to suggest that the live version of *Dazed And Confused* on the *Yardbirds '68* album is better than the version record by Zeppelin six months later. "I like Keith's voice better. And all credit to Jimmy, what he's done with these old tapes really shows just how good the band was at that point, despite me and Keith wanting to step back once that tour was over."

Another fond memory McCarty has is of the time he visited Page just after Zeppelin formed. "I was still friendly with Jimmy, and I remember when he'd recorded the first Zeppelin album I went down to his house and he played it to me and I was very impressed. But I could see, you know, I could hear the similarities with our sound. And some of the songs, as you said, 'overlapped'." Another wry chuckle.

While Page went off to form what quickly became the biggest band on the planet, Relf and McCarty formed the much gentler Renaissance – about as far away from the musical pyrotechnics of the Anderson Theatre show sound as it is possible to get. Dreja went on to become a successful photographer, one of his first big clients being Led Zeppelin – the photos on the back of the first Zep album are his.

Years later, Page would recall: "Having played with The Yardbirds in America where they had all the underground circuit, the Fillmores, and the Grande Ballroom in Detroit, all these sorts of places, there'd been a real following for what we were doing in The Yardbirds. So when they folded I thought, well, I've just got to continue. I know what the climate is, I know what the radio situation is over there. I know we don't want to do singles. So that's going to be the first thing I'll be saying. And I knew I wanted to produce the group."

All he needed now was a new singer, bassist and drummer…

Yardbirds '78 is out now, available exclusively from JimmyPage.com. Two-CD and two-LP vinyl sets are available, plus a signed deluxe box set containing the two CDs, the two vinyl LPs, a deluxe art book with sleeve notes from The Yardbirds and signed by Jimmy Page, Jim McCarty and Chris Dreja, price £400.

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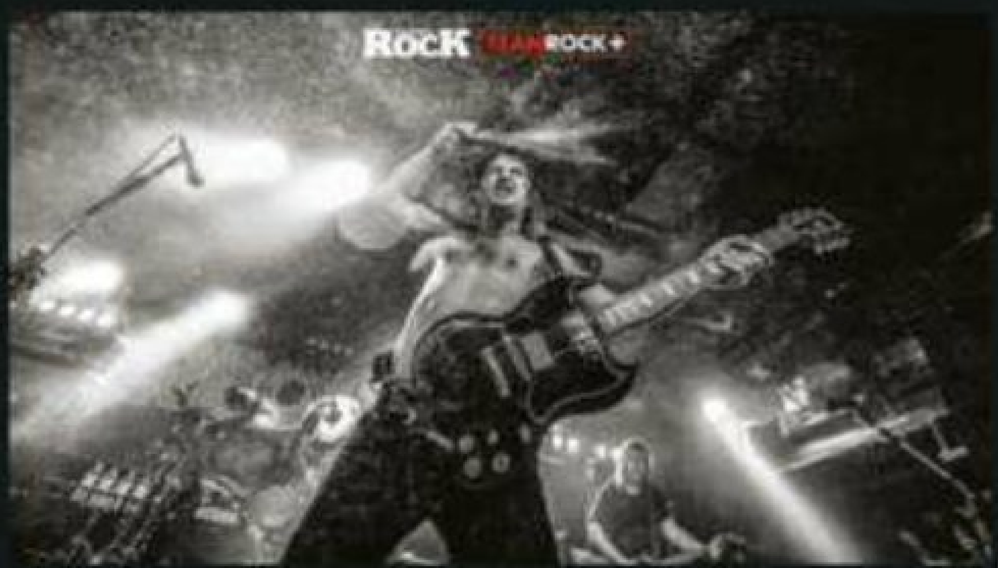

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Heavy Load

Heavy questions for heavy rockers

"Embrace everything," says guitar icon **Michael Schenker**. But that doesn't include his brother Rudolf...

Interview: **Malcolm Dome**

In his own way, Michael Schenker is one of rock's most influential guitarists. Since starting out as a teenager with the Scorpions during the early 70s, he's been venerated as an original, inspirational musician. During his subsequent tenures with UFO and with his own eponymous band, his trademark performances with the Flying V became one of rock's most enduring images. At 62 he still commands adulation and respect; when we speak to him he's touring with the Schenker Fest, featuring many of those with whom he's played during his extensive solo career.

Do you believe in God?
I believe in a higher power, creator. And some people do call that God, yes.

What's the biggest misconception about you?
I have no idea. I never take any notice about what people are saying or writing about me because it can take over your life, concentrating on what others think of you. To me that is all irrelevant.

What are the best and worst drugs you've taken?
I have tried just about every drug. LSD trips are horrible. I am allergic to cocaine, and I hated smoking joints because I lost control of myself. All drugs are really bad. They make you useless, and who wants that?

What's your greatest regret?
I never have regrets. Every decision you make helps to shape your life. You have to have things which go wrong in order to learn. Never regret anything, because each day makes you who you are.

What was your career low?
Again, I don't look at things like highs and lows. You need the positive and negative in your life, and they are both important. What you might consider to be a low is, in fact, an important part of making you the person you've become. Just embrace everything.

"I've had the chances to join Aerosmith, Deep Purple, Ozzy..."

You've been linked in the past with one or two high-profile bands. How close were you to joining any of them?
I came close to joining a few. But each time I pulled back at the last minute, because I realised that I was better with my freedom. I've had the chance to join Aerosmith, Deep Purple, Ozzy and Ian Hunter, and I could have made a lot more money if I'd taken one of those offers, and maybe also been a bigger name, but that never meant anything to me.

How difficult are you to work with?
I don't think I am at all difficult. I know what I want. My passion is for playing lead guitar, and if you don't understand that, then there will be a problem between us. Obviously if you have two people in a band with vastly differing visions of what they want, then it leads to trouble. But if you accept me the way that I am, and appreciate what I want to achieve, then I'm very easy to get along with.

Have you ever suffered from stage fright?
That's an interesting one. I used to suffer very badly from stage fright, but in 2008 it was suddenly blown away. Something inside me said: "Michael, let's get on stage!" And ever since then I cannot wait to get on and play for the fans. I don't understand why this happened. Perhaps it was because I was getting older. But everything turned for me, and I was freed up as a person.

What is the secret of success?
My passion and vision has made me who I am. I never copy others. I use the inspiration of Led Zeppelin and Deep Purple as a screen on to which I play my guitar. It's important for me not to copy others, which is why I haven't listened to anyone else's music for years.

What is the meaning of life?
Somebody recently told me: "The meaning of life is meaningless, and it's meaningless to think the meaning of life is meaningless." When I thought about it, that made sense. And I felt a weight lifted from my shoulders.

What were you like at school?
I was a dreamer. I always knew I was destined to do something musical, so school was a little irrelevant. But I realised that a decent education was a good idea for the basics in life so I did enough work to pass exams.

How do currently get on with your brother Rudolf?
I stay as far away from him as possible. I do not trust Rudolf at all. There are things he's done to me musically and business-wise that I do not like. So it's better for me to keep my distance from him.

What in your life are you most proud of?
The fact that I made my own choices. That is something which makes me very happy. We all screw up in life, but as long as you learn from those errors, then you'll be fine. I am happy that I have been able to do that.

What will be written on your tombstone?
'Still on a mission to make music'.

Resurrection by Michael Schenker Fest is out on March 2 on Nuclear Blast.

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